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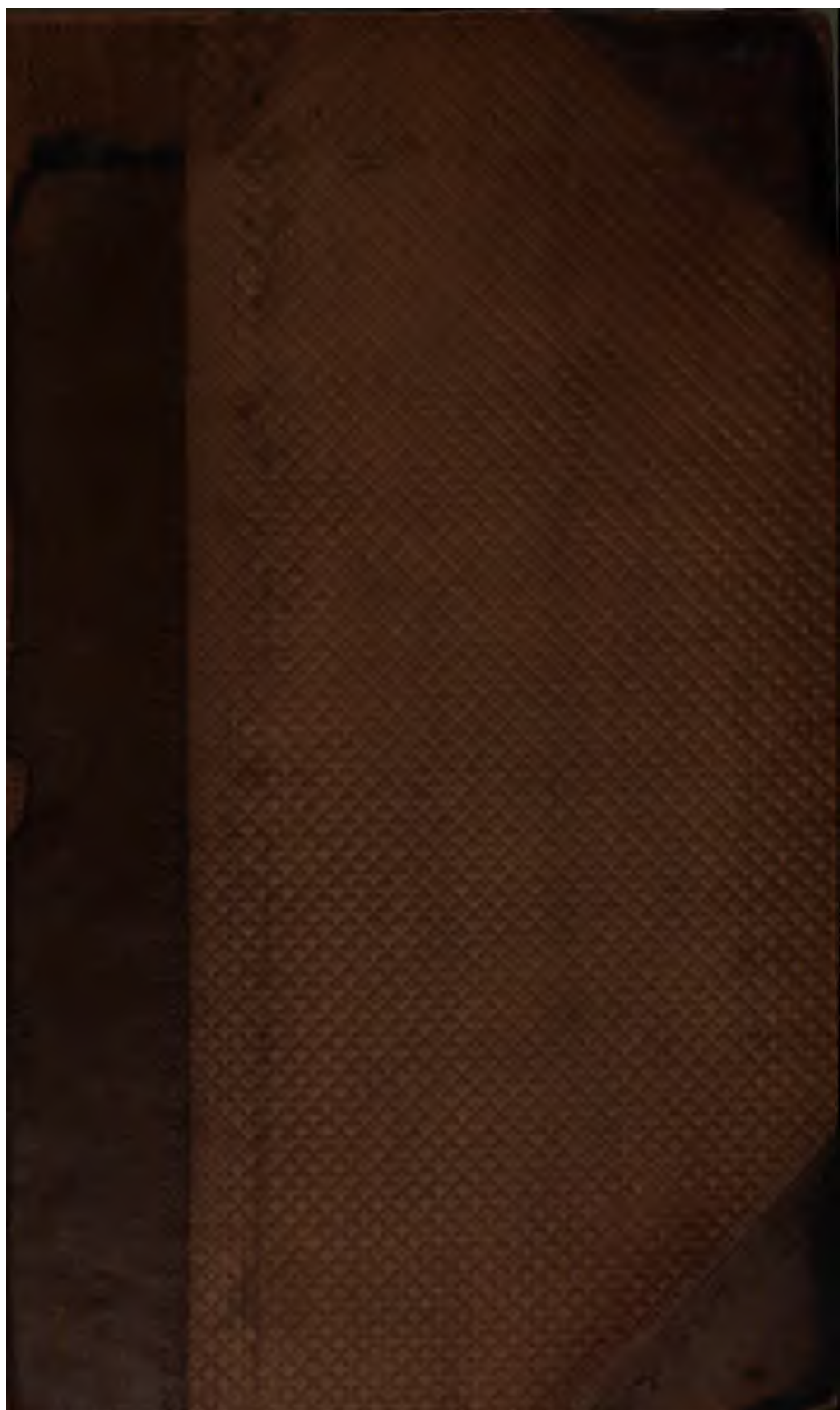
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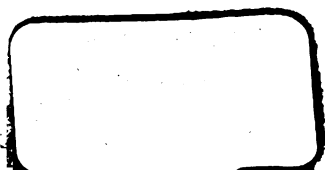


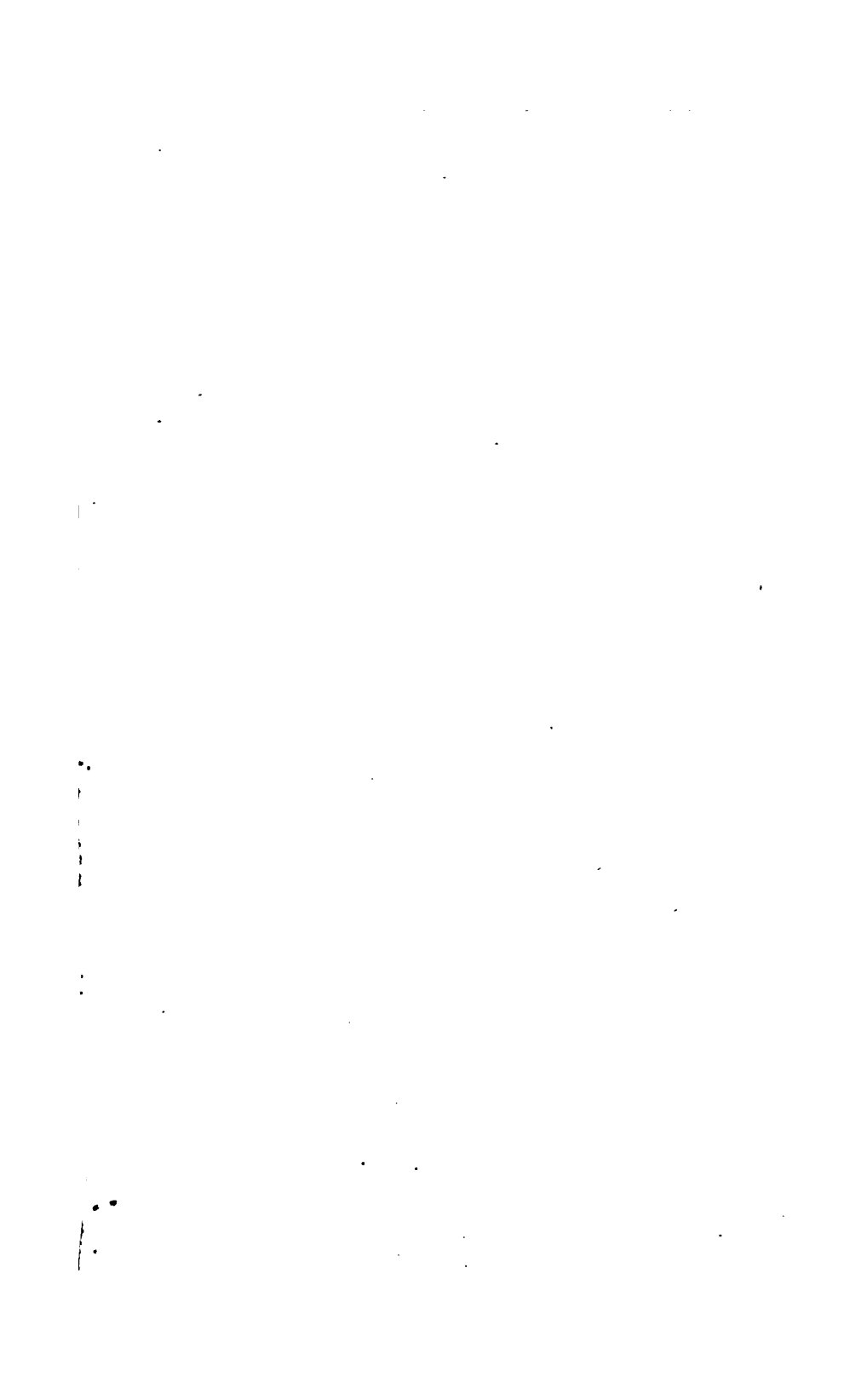


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HENNEBON,
OR
THE COUNTESS OF MONTFORT.
VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

HENNEBON,

OR

THE COUNTESS OF MONTFORT;

AND

BERTHA OF BURGUNDY.

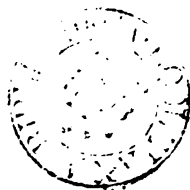
IN THREE VOLUMES.

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HENNEBON;
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CHAPTER I.

Sieges and storms appear,
And wars and conquests fill the important year.

ADDISON.

THE Duchy of Brittany was early considered one of the most valuable fiefs of the crown of France; its vicinity to England, its almost insular situation, and the extent of its resources, caused it at once to be both feared and courted by the monarchs of that country, who often found

their vassals more tenacious of their rights than was either agreeable or convenient. Philip de Valois had long been engaged in wars with the Earl of Hainault; he brought a numerous force into the field, and among the barons who attended him, none was better accoutred than John III. Duke of Brittany. At length a truce was agreed on at Tournay, and the princes and nobles returned to their respective countries. The Duke of Brittany was seized with a disorder shortly after leaving the camp, and died at Caen, 30th of April, 1341, leaving no lineal descendants. His next brother, the Duke of Penthièvre, had been dead many years, and left one daughter, Jane, whom John, her uncle, married to Charles of Blois, youngest son of Guy Earl of Blois and Margaret de Valois, and nephew of King Philip VI. On her marriage he had promised her the Duchy of Brittany after his decease, and thought to insure her accession by so powerful an alliance;

but on his deathbed (so says John de Louviur) he declared the Earl of Montfort (his half-brother by the father's side) his successor, yet without having revoked his former promises to his niece.

John, Earl of Montfort, was an ambitious man; he had married Jane, sister of the Count Louis of Flanders, and immediately on the demise of his brother, repaired to Nantes, the capital of Brittany, and caused himself to be proclaimed Duke, under the title of John IV. By the advice of his wife he determined to hold a solemn court and feast at Nantes, and summonses were accordingly sent to all the nobles and barons of Brittany, inviting them to attend and do their fealty and homage to him as their rightful lord. Before the day appointed for this ceremony he went to Limoges, where he heard his brother had amassed large sums of money. The citizens received him with great splendour; swore allegiance, and delivered up the grand treasury into his hands. Having remained

some time at Limoges he returned to Nantes, where his countess was anxiously expecting him, for the day of the feast drew near; but no one appeared to answer the summons, save one knight. "Nevertheless," says Froissart, "they continued the feast for three days with the citizens of Nantes and those near the city, in the best manner they could."

He then determined to expend the vast treasures of which he had possessed himself, in raising a body of troops, to enforce his claims with those cities that were disposed to question his rights. He was so active in his measures that in a very short time he found himself at the head of a large army. He first attacked Brest, a strong castle situated on the sea-coast, about a day's journey from Nantes; it was resolutely defended by the inhabitants, but their brave governor, Sir Walter Clisson, being killed, and the earl promising them indemnity for all that had passed, on their acknow-

ledging him as their lawful lord, they surrendered. Thence he proceeded to Rennes, causing all the villages and towns through which he passed to swear fealty to him. The capture of this city was attended with some difficulty; but having taken the governor prisoner, and threatening to hang him if the garrison did not immediately yield, they opened their gates, and the earl entered Rennes in triumph. Hennebon was the next place of consequence of which he became possessed by capitulation; and soon after the whole of Brittany acknowledged him as duke.

Charles of Blois, who, in right of his wife, considered himself the lawful sovereign of Brittany, on hearing of the success of his rival, hurried to Paris, and complained to his uncle, Philip de Valois. By the advice of his peers, the king commanded the Earl of Montfort to appear before the Parliament of Paris, that his claims and those of his nephew might be fully considered. The

earl obeyed the summons, but, from his reception at court, suspecting treachery, he shortly after escaped, and returned to Nantes, and thence issued writs to all the towns and castles which had surrendered to him, to prepare for their defence.

Philip de Valois was much enraged when the escape of the Earl of Montfort was discovered ; he commanded, however, his pretensions to be tried against those of his nephew, but the parliament unanimously adjudged the dukedom to the latter. Upon this decision the king promised to Lord Charles every assistance in money and troops to conquer his province, and desired his son, the Duke of Normandy, to take the command of the expedition. Many powerful barons likewise accompanied him : the Count d'Alençon his uncle, the Duke of Burgundy, the Count of Blois his brother, the Duke of Bourbon, the Lord Louis of Spain, the Count James de Bourbon, the Count

d'Eu constable of France, the Count de Guisnes his son, the Viscount de Rohan, and all the other princes and barons at that time in Paris ; so that an army of twenty thousand men was speedily raised, and, upon entering Brittany, they were joined by a body of Genoese, consisting of eight thousand, under the command of Otho de Ræ and Charles Guesmanly.

After taking some strong castles, and laying waste the country in many parts, they resolved upon besieging Nantes, where the Earl of Montfort at that time resided. This city possessed a numerous garrison, and was well supplied. The knights on the Earl of Montfort's side much and frequently annoyed the foraging parties of Charles, and there were many skirmishes between them. One morning an attack upon the baggage-waggons and provision-carts of the enemy having been ordered by the earl, they were so warmly defended, that the knight who commanded the party sounded

a retreat, the lives of many citizens and burgesses, and also much booty, being endangered by their continuance of the struggle. The ill-success of this enterprise much enraged the earl, as he attributed it in great measure to the knight's having so soon retired: in his wrath he accused him of negligence and want of courage.

Three days after this, a messenger arrived at the tent of Charles, with an offer from some of the burgesses to yield the city and person of the earl, provided no injury were done to the inhabitants. Charles swore on his sword that the townsmen should be unharmed; a body of troops entered the place, marched straight to the castle, broke down the gates, and carried off the earl prisoner to their camp.

* * * *

The shades of evening were closing fast upon that massive pile of building, whose walls a few short hours before bristled with spears from every loophole, and from whose lofty towers the proud banner of the Earl of Montfort floated on the breeze. The clash of arms, the bowstring's twang, the hoarse voice of the trumpet, which had so lately shaken the battlements, were now all hushed in silence ; the stillness of the hour was broken only by the unhallowed shouts of those revelling burghers who had so basely betrayed their lord. The last rays of the setting sun, streaming through a window of the castle, fell on the tall and powerful figure of a knight, who leaned in moody silence in one of the embrasures ; his features were handsome, but the dark eye and contracted brow evinced a working in his brain which he would fain conceal : his mouth was almost beautiful, but that it wore a fixed expression of sarcasm, and

the dark hair which shaded his face, gave him the appearance of one not to be offended with impunity.

As the parting rays enlightened the spot where the knight stood, they served only to make the rest of the apartment appear more gloomy: a casque, a baldrick, and a sword of exquisite workmanship, lay on a table in the centre of the room; the rest of the furniture consisted only of a few rude benches; the walls were hung with spears and shields and suits of armour. At the feet of the knight lay a hound, who seemed as if fearful by the slightest movement to disturb his master's reverie. The knight started suddenly, as the distant sounds of merriment struck upon his ear. "Yes, yes," he exclaimed, "rejoice, ye vulgar boors, ye light-hearted fools! ye had no wrongs to complain of; but I, insulted before the townsmen—have my deeds cast in my teeth—be branded with cowardice—and by *him*! Was this his

gratitude to his bravest defender? Where would have been his treasure; nay, his people, if I had not retreated? Could he expect a few burghers to mow down an army? But I have had my revenge. Montfort shall rue the day he could not better restrain his tongue.—"Tis not soft lodging here, methinks," he continued, looking round, "yet better were this and liberty than to live idle in the tents of a conqueror. I will to Charles to see how he demeans himself in his prosperity."

His sudden movement aroused the dog, who shaking himself, looked in his master's face and fawned upon him, as if to know the cause of this extraordinary perturbation. "Ah," said the knight, bending down to stroke him, while an expression of almost tenderness passed over his features; "thou knowest thy friends, my faithful Gaymon; teach my proud chieftain to learn gratitude of a dog! But it avails not now, Montfort; I defy thee. Why do I linger here? Yet

stay, there are but twenty leagues hence to Rennes; I must see Iola once more. Oh, Iola! Iola! if thou wouldst but listen to my suit, for thy sweet sake I would even now, ere my treason is discovered, return to the councils of thy mistress, and aid her to retake the husband I have betrayed;—but if thy looks are scornful as of wont, I abjure thee, the countess, and thy cause.” And placing his hand upon the crest of his helmet, which was a tiger, “We will see, my pretty maiden, if it be not dangerous to arouse the tiger from his lair.”

“Boy!” cried he to a page without, “how goes the hour?”

“The vesper-bell but now is tolling,” was the page’s reply.

“So late!” exclaimed the knight, “I must to horse directly; but I want no company. Begone, sirrah!” he cried, seeing the boy hesitate; “didst not hear?”

"Yea, my lord, but——"

"But me no buts; go about thy business."

"How captious he is!" muttered the page, as he retired; "something must have crossed him."

Yet he knew his master too well to hesitate longer in obeying his commands, and ere the knight had time to buckle on his sword, his neighing charger announced his readiness for departure. He left the city in silence, and took the road to Rennes, musing, as he went, on future schemes of ambition and revenge.

But we must leave him to follow the Earl of Montfort, who, on being surprised by the Lord Charles's forces, and seeing his own citizens armed against him, could offer no resistance. It chanced that he was carried to the tent of Sir Reginald de Courtenaye, a brave knight, who had had no share in his capture, having been absent the whole morning on a foraging expedition, and who now hastened to receive his noble prisoner without re-

lieving himself from his cambrous armour, excepting his helmet, which his squire had just unlaced. He was about the middle height; the freshness of his countenance and the activity of his every motion betokened early manhood; for though his high and open forehead indicated all the ingenuousness of youth, the deep blue eye and the firm outline of his nose announced the thought of maturer years; his mouth, too large to be strictly handsome, when he spoke or smiled, displayed teeth of dazzling whiteness; his brown hair curled around his forehead, and the care with which it was tended evinced that even amidst the tumults of war he forgot not the vanities of peace.

He saluted the earl as he entered; but his courtesy was received in silence: the lord of Montfort scarcely raised his eyes to acknowledge his presence.

“It grieves me much, fair sir,” said Sir Re-

ginald, "to see your captivity sit so heavily on your brow. Be of good cheer; the Lord Charles, my master, is an honourable knight, and doubtless will entertain you as becomes your rank."

The earl, with a gesture of impatience, replied, "What boots it, sir knight, to offer consolation to a prisoner such as I am?"

"Nay, my lord," said Countenaye, "you look too gravely on your mischance; had fortune favoured you, the Lord Charles might now have been your guest."

"Had I yielded my sword, rescue or no rescue, on the battle-plain, I could have endured captivity; but to be treacherously betrayed by my lawful subjects, is too much. Small honour will accrue to the Lord Charles when the world hears how John de Montfort, Duke of Britany, became his prisoner."

"My lord," replied Sir Reginald, "surely the Lord Charles cannot be blamed for accepting

the offer made him by your own burghers, to place his greatest enemy in his hands !”

“ It is too much, too much,” cried the earl, and he paced the tent with an agitated step. Then stopping suddenly, “ Know you the chief framer of this valorous enterprise ?”

“ No, my lord,” answered the knight ; “ I am but just returned from the field, and right glad am I that I had no hand in your capture by such means.”

De Montfort remained silent for a few moments, and then advancing, laid his hand upon the knight’s arm, “ Sir Reginald de Courtenaye, if such be your name, I as your prisoner demand a boon : will you cause my lion-hearted dame, who now holds her state at Rennes, to be informed of my misfortune ?”

“ I cannot, my lord. We are no traitors here : no knight, nor squire, nor even valet, would offer to play the part of letter-carrier be-

tween the Earl of Montfort and his countess, to inform her of our strength or weakness, and invite her troops to the attack."

"You refuse my request, sir knight," rejoined the earl—"well, she will hear it in time; Jane of Flanders never shrank from danger, and the usurper will find that though Montfort is taken, he is not yet Duke of Brittany."

At the name of Jane of Flanders, the knight put his hand to his head, and remained buried in thought; at last, slowly withdrawing it, he said, "Lord of Montfort, I am your mortal foe, and as such the enemy of your countess; but I cannot forget that in years long past, when I donned my mimic armour in my father's tent at Cassel, your countess, then a beauteous demoiselle, honoured me with her favour, and saved me more than once from that father's wrath, who—honoured be his ashes—was somewhat harsh upon his son. I cannot but remember that your lady dubbed

me her knight, and presented me to the Lord Louis, her brother, as the saviour of his life; my good fortune having led me to discover a most foul conspiracy against it. My gratitude to the Lady Jane shall make me forget the Countess of Montfort; so give me your letters, and I pledge my knightly word I will deliver them into your lady's own hand. More than that I cannot do, so expect me not to bring you a reply."

"Sir knight," answered the captive nobleman, "as you perform this deed faithfully, may you have success in arms and find favour with your lady! My despatches shall be brief, for I love not long epistles, and I pray you to speed."

The knight having commanded his body squire, Eustace St. Valery, to seek in the tent of some churchman for writing materials, retired to put off his more weighty armour. Eustace soon re-entered

with the ink and paper, and hastened to assist his master. "See," said Sir Reginald, "that Black Quentin be saddled without delay." The squire obeyed in silence, but, his curiosity being excited by the knight's impatience, he quickly returned to know the cause. "Are you for the field again so soon, my master?" he asked; "you have need of rest after this day's toil, and the sun is going down; all the camp are feasting and rejoicing at having gotten the Earl of Montfort prisoner. Will you not join the knights at the table of the Lord Charles?"

"Cease thy tongue, babblers," said Sir Reginald; "I have that to do which will not brook delay."

"Let me then accompany you, I pray; for what answer shall I make to Lord Charles, or Lord Louis of Spain, or any other fair knight who may demand the bravest of the brave?"

"I must go alone," said Courtenaye, "and you may reply what you list, if any inquire after

me." So saying, he returned to the Earl of Montfort, leaving his squire somewhat doubtful and dismayed.

Enstace St. Valery was in the spring-tide of his youth; he might have seen twenty summers. His fair complexion and delicate frame appeared ill calculated to bear the brunt of the battle, but his attachment to his master was so true and so loyal, that it seemed to nerve his arm, and enable him to overcome difficulties and dangers from which a less devoted follower would have shrunk. He was lively and good-tempered, and might have served for the model of old Chaucer's charming description :—

"Singing he was, or floyting all the day,
He was as fresh as is the month of May,
He could songs make, and well endite,
Just, and eke dance, and well pourtraie and write,
So hote he loved, that by nighterdale
He slept no more than dothe the nightingale."

CHAPTER II.

This man's brow, like to a tile-leaf,
Foretells the nature of a tragic volume.

King Henry IV, Part ii.

THE sun shone brightly on the city of Rennes, and everything wore the appearance of security and happiness. The river Vilaine flowed peacefully on, its course scarcely perceptible, but from the ripple of its tiny waves as they kissed the banks ; its blue waters, now sparkling in the sun-beam, now thrown into shadow by the high buildings on either side, reflected their lofty turrets and numerous gables. The narrow streets were filled with passengers intent on business or pleasure. Here a group of peasants coming in from

the country, and laden with the produce of the neighbouring farms, greeted their acquaintance among the townspeople with a "Good day to ye, my masters! a glorious morning this! any news stirring?" There a grave burgher discussed with a substantial Fleming, the value of the merchandize he was daily expecting from Brussels, the probability of the Count of Flanders forming an alliance with the Earl of Montfort against Charles of Blois, and the influence that event might have upon trade. Here again a company of joyous cavaliers, with waving plumes and gay surcoats, caracoled along the streets, their Spanish jennets apparently as careless as their riders, who delighted in astonishing the gaping multitude by their skill and dexterity in escaping from the dangers they sought. Even the old castle appeared less grim and cold, as if it would not be the only gloomy object in existence, when the bright daylight forced its way through the nar-

row windows; and the grey stones which often looked so chill, seemed now to court the gladdening influence of the sun. Its walls rang with the laugh of light-hearted inmates, or echoed back the sweet tones of a rote or lute; and all Nature, animate and inanimate, rejoiced in the return of spring.

In an apartment of the castle called the chamber of Charlemagne, from its being hung with tapestry representing the adventures of that hero and his paladins, a party of ladies were occupied in various works suited to their sex. She who, from the respect paid her, might be judged of superior rank, was seated at a table, embroidering a silken banner with the arms of Brittany and Montfort. She had passed the bloom of youth, but that had given place only to a dignity which seemed better to accord with her rank and station; there was a majesty in the turn of her head, and although her features were not regular,

they possessed a certain *air noble*, which is sometimes more striking and impressive than even beauty itself. Her high expansive brow, and her calm, penetrating, grey eye, could harbour no mean or ungenerous thought; her nose was slightly aquiline, and her mouth, which, when grave, indicated resolution and firmness of purpose, when relaxed into a smile, possessed almost more than feminine sweetness. In stature, she was rather above the middle height, and her well-proportioned figure and lofty bearing could scarcely be concealed even by the loose and somewhat unbecoming dress of the times. She was habited in a green silk robe, fastened at the throat by a narrow circlet and clasps of gold, and an embroidered girdle confined it round the waist; the sleeves were of white muslin, large, and descended but little below the elbow; her coif was of the palest pink satin, edged with lace.

Such, at the period of which we are writing,

was Jane of Flanders, the consort of the Earl of Montfort, and the heroine of Brittany.

At her feet sat a beautiful boy, about six years old, deeply occupied in the manufacture of a bow and arrows. "Julian," said his mother, as she stooped to part the golden curls that waved over his forehead, "should our cousin Charles attack us here, methinks we should want no other knight than you ; a lance yesterday, a bow to-day—you will have all your arms complete in time : can you persuade no fair lady to embroider a surcoat or a pennon for you ?"

"Oh, yes ! cried the child, his blue eyes sparkling with delight as he spoke ; "Iola Vaudemont has promised me a pennon, and Blanche has half completed my coat-of-arms ; my banner will not be so grand as that which you are working, but then you know it is not a real one."

As she drew him towards her, and kissed his white forehead, the mother could not help an-

ticipating the time when she should see him in the field and at the tourney, perhaps the flower of chivalry and the pride of France ; and she inwardly prayed he might never disgrace the name of his ancestors.

“ Mother,” said the child, breaking from her, “ let me go, I want to find Iola ; I don’t believe she has begun my penoncelle, and I long to see it fluttering at my spear-head. Oh, Iola,” he cried, running up to her as she entered, “ I am so glad you are come ; Blanche has almost finished my surcoat, and you have not begun my colours yet.”

“ Ah ! Iola,” said the Countess of Montfort, “ your presence has been much desired ; but where have you been, my child ? you look vexed and thoughtful.”

She whom the countess now addressed, was in the early bloom of beauty ; her hair fell in rich curls over her neck and shoulders, and was only

confined around her head by a string of pearls: happily for Lola, her thoughts needed not concealment, for her dark eyes and transparent complexion too readily betrayed them; her nose and mouth were finely turned, and there was a melancholy sweetness in the latter which made you love her, you scarce knew why. Yet Lola was not always grave, far from it; she was cheerful, nay, gay sometimes, but a pensive expression seemed most congenial to her cast of features. Her strongest feeling was affection for her mistress, with whom she had resided since her earliest childhood; and for her sake, she thought there was no danger or difficulty she could not overcome.

"What ails thee, fair one?" said the countess again, observing she hesitated; "I am sure there is something wrong."

"Not much, madam,—it is over now, I hope," answered Lola; "but Sir Louis de Barre, to whom I thought I gave a final refusal some time

since, met me this morning on the terrace, and has been trying the last hour to move my compassion, as he says."

"Well, child, that need not make you unhappy; he is handsome and bold, and in a short time will doubtless find a demoiselle less insensible to his suit."

"Oh! madam, 'tis not his disappointment makes me grave; but when he saw I was resolved, his whole countenance and manner altered, and he said I should one day regret my cruelty to him; that if I loved my mistress I should listen to his prayer, for much would it advantage her, When I begged him to explain himself, he only replied by asking again if I would be his; and when I still persisted in a refusal, he said, 'You will one day repent your obstinacy,' and so he left me."

"His speeches are as mysterious to me as to you, but I dare to say he only made use of them

to work upon your feelings, and possibly they mean nothing after all."

"Now, Iola," said Julian, "if you have done talking, do begin my banner; see, Blanche has just finished her work:"—and with childish impatience, he begged she would immediately dress, or rather disguise him in it.

The youthful scampstress was considerably below the ordinary height; she had a waist which you might have spanned, and a hand and arm which the queen of the fairies might have envied; her fair hair hung in natural curls round her face, her blue eye beamed with happiness, and her whole countenance bespoke as much delight as the baby boy she was adorning.

"Oh, how beautiful! and is this real gold?" cried the child.

"Yes," answered Blanche; "but be not so restless, or your coat will hang quité on one shoulder."

The martial toilette was hardly completed, when a page entered and informed the countess, there was a knight without, desiring to speak with her.

“Who is he?” she inquired.

“I know him not, my lady, he is a stranger, but he seems to have ridden fast and far, for his horse is all in a foam.”

“Did you not ask his name, Guené?”

“Yes, madam, but he would not disclose it: his cognizance is a falcon; and he said he must see you, and that instantly, if possible.”

“You may admit him,” said the countess; “some one from my lord, perhaps, to tell of new victories.”

Sir Reginald de Courtenaye, whom our readers will have rightly conjectured to be the disturber of this abode of innocence and peace, on being presented to the countess, knelt on one knee, delivered the packet, and then retired a few paces.

"Ha ! it is indeed my lord's superscription," she exclaimed, as she cut the silk that fastened it.

"How grave she looks !" whispered Iola to her companion, "I fear me the tidings are not joyous ;" and she stole a glance at the messenger.

She was struck with his countenance, at that moment expressive of admiration, mingled with sympathy for the high-minded and unfortunate woman in whose presence he now stood : he felt that he had dashed the cup of happiness from her lips, and in honour he could not assist in restoring it. He mused too on the change that years had made ; when he last saw her, she was a young and lively maiden, now he beheld her as a wife and a mother ; and although no cares had as yet shadowed her brow, her golden prospects were about to be clouded, and the way before her was become dark and uncertain.

From her his eye wandered to the child, who stood gazing at him in silent wonder ; then

to the fairy form of Blanche, who was tying the last point of the surcoat of the youthful cavalier; but his looks rested on the dark-eyed Iola, whose whole soul seemed wrapt in watching the countenance of her mistress.

On first opening the packet, the countess turned pale, but the colour soon rushed again to her cheek, and instantly recovering herself, she beckoned the knight to approach, and in a calm voice said, "You are the bearer of heavy news, sir knight, but I thank you for the despatch you have used. May I ask to whom I am indebted for this service?"

"Most noble lady," answered the knight, "I am under a vow to conceal my name, I therefore pray you to excuse me."

"You are a brave knight, Sir Unknown, and I doubt not loyal and true,—at least allow me to show you that Jane of Montfort can reward the gallant bearer of even such unpleasant news;" and

taking a gold chain from a casket on the table she offered it to him.

"My lady," returned the knight, "I am not unmindful of your favour, but the same vow which binds me to secrecy, forbids me to accept a gift."

"Indeed! sir knight, your lady must be a jealous one, and you are a most *preux chevalier*. My lord informs me you cannot take back an answer to his letters; I pray you tell me is he well in health? How does he bear his—his"—captivity she would have said, but the word died on her tongue. She passed her hand over her brow as if to recover herself, but the knight interrupting her answered—"The Earl of Montfort has borne himself bravely, and though he is somewhat grave, yields not to despair."

"His is a noble spirit," said the countess, her eye beaming as she spoke. "At least, fair sir, accept my grateful thanks;" and she extended

her hand to him, which Courtenaye respectfully kissed and withdrew.

The countess leaned her elbow on the table and buried her head in her hand ; she seemed deep in thought, and her maidens dared not disturb her. Iola's eyes had been fixed on the handsome figure and noble countenance of the knight, while he declined the present of her mistress. Her curiosity was raised, and busied in conjectures who he might be, she heeded not the importunities of Julian, until gently pulling her arm he roused her from the reverie into which she had fallen, and asked when she would fulfil her promise to him.

" I must go seek my "broidery-frame, fair sir," she said, smiling, " ere your commands can be obeyed," and with a light step left the room.

She had to pass through an anti-room and along a corridor. In the recess of a window near the end of the corridor, the grotesque figure of

the Earl of Montfort's jester met her view, who, preferring the sweets of peace to the tumults of war, had remained with the countess at Rennes when his lord went to Nantes. He was dressed in a light-blue silk jerkin, made tight to the figure, and fastened round the waist with a scarlet cord; his sleeves were of yellow silk slashed with blue; his lower limbs were invested in orange-coloured small-clothes, and his stockings were green, gartered with scarlet: so that he bore very much the appearance of a walking rainbow, save that he had not paid due attention to the prismatic arrangement in his costume. His eyes were small, black, and incessantly in motion; his lips were so thin that when his mouth was closed he seemed to have only a long transverse slit in his face; his head was bald, and the two wings which served the purpose of ears, rose on either side rather above the level of the table-land between them; his body looked as if it

should have belonged to a very tall man, and his legs to a very short one ; but the superabundance of the one cancelled the deficiency of the other, so that, although somewhat disproportioned, he did not exceed the ordinary height.

His person being entirely concealed by the embrasure of the window, Iola would have passed him, had he not started out upon her, crossed her path, and intimated by a sign that he had something to say to her.

“ Well, my good Lalala,” said she, “ what do you want with me ? Have you any griefs to complain of ? ”

He shook his head. “ Come,” she said, “ speak at once, you know I cannot endure your dumb show.”

“ Ha ! fair lady, I could tell you something if I listed, but I think I won’t now.”

“ Nothing that I should care to know, I dare say, Sir Lalala ; so let me pass.”

"Umph! Lady Brunette, tigers are handsome, but they are ravenous."

"Well; what then?"

"Oooh!" said he, drawing his mouth in the form of a perfect circle, "Oooh! visitors betimes, lady, this morning!"

"That is no affair of your's, sir jester."

"Umph! I have ears;" and he waved his huge wings to and fro.

"Nobody will dispute that point with you, I am sure," said Lola laughing.

"I have eyes too. A falcon is a bold bird, flies high, but touches the ground sometimes, and then, if he be not quick enough, he may be caught." The fool groaned as if with fatigue at so long a sentence, for Lalala was somewhat laconic.

"Still," said Lola, "I am all in the dark."

"'Tis a sunny morning too," observed Lalala, "I love the sun, 'tis warm, warm, warm. Pleasant on the terrace."

Iola coloured with indignation. "Good morning, Sir Lalala," she said, "I waste my time listening to your idle words."

"Oooh ! I have offended ; pray go, pray go, belle Brunette, I will keep my information to myself."

"Have you any thing to say to me ?" The jester nodded assent.

"Then I should be much obliged to you to tell me at once."

"Much obliged, oooh ! much obliged to Lalala !—the Lady Iola much obliged to Lalala, but will Lalala much oblige the Lady Iola ?" Iola waited a moment, expecting after he had taken breath he would continue. "That was a gallant cavalier who paid his devoirs to my lady this morning ; do you know who he is ?"

"No, who ?" asked Iola.

The jester shook his head.

"Tell me his name," said Iola ; her curiosity overcoming her prudence.

The jester smiled, or rather elongated the incision in his face until the two ends nearly reached his ears. "Oooh!" said he, suddenly drawing his mouth again into a circular form; "my lady is interested in him!"

"No," said Iola, "I only asked from curiosity, I do not care to know."

"That's lucky!" returned the fool, "for I don't know, so I can't tell you."

"Have you been keeping me here all this time, to tell me you do not know who the stranger knight is?"

"Maybe I had more to say; maybe I saw Sir Louis of the tiger this morning; maybe I heard him speak, maybe I know what he said."

"And what did he say?" cried Iola.

"Oh! nothing about you, my pretty lady. He talked about a bird."

"A bird?"

"Yes, a falcon is a bird, is it not?"

"There is nothing very remarkable in that ; to whom was he speaking ?"

"To the person he loves best in the world, but one who never contradicts him," replied Lalala, with a knowing shake of the head. Iola blushed. "Nay, never blush about it; may not a knight talk to himself without bringing the colour into a fair lady's cheeks ?"

"Talking to himself ! I thought you overheard a conversation between him and some one else ?"

"Yes, some one who never contradicts him ; well, himself never contradicts himself, he loves himself too well for that."

"Now really, Lalala, I cannot spend the whole morning listening to your detail of Sir Louis' soliloquies, for I dare say they import me little."

"Right," answered the jester ; "they import you little enough, but they import the knight of the falcon a good deal."

"Indeed!" said Iola; "then tell me, for the countess is interested in him."

"Not so her lady Iola! Oooh! But you are the best of the demoiselles in the castle, and I like you because your eyes are like mine,"—Iola could scarcely repress a smile,—"so I will tell you. Now if it had been little fairly fair, I would have teased her for an hour before she should have got the truth out of me."

"There is a good Lalala!"

"Oooh! eeeh! Oooh! eeeh! A good Lalala! Who ever called me good before? Well, I saw the tiger knight this morning in the court of the keep, and I saw his lips move as if he were talking; but I saw nobody else, so I guessed he was talking to himself: and I said to myself, 'Lalala, you have long ears, longer than other people, so you ought to hear more, they were given you to be used;' so I thought I would use them, and I got quite close to him, but he did not see me.

Oooh !” and the fool took a long breath as if quite exhausted.

“ And what did you hear ? asked Iola.

“ He said, ‘ ’Twould be a golden opportunity—treachery—undoubted.’ There, that’s what he said.”

“ Nothing more !” exclaimed Iola, with a look of disappointment.

“ Maybe he did, maybe he said ‘ The falcon flies high now and thinks he sees clear, but I can find a leash and a hood ! oooh ! aaah !”

“ Go on,” said Iola.

“ Then he walked on a little farther, and I walked after him, and I heard him say, ‘ Ha ha ! I’ll watch the bird—in vain I sought to repay him before Nantes. ’Tis only a cat has nine lives, a man has but one. But what is life without honour ?”

“ Very fine !” said Iola, “ is that all ?”

“ Nay, is not that enough ? But the best was the last—‘ Revenge ! revenge ! revenge !’ He

turned round then, and I was afraid he would find me out, so I stole behind the wall; he passed without seeing me, but I did not care to hear more, and I have been saying it over ever since—‘Revenge! revenge! revenge!’ Good morning, mistress, I can’t waste my time here any longer, oooh!” So saying he departed, leaving Iola fixed like a statue to the spot, endeavouring exactly to recall the words of the fool. That the knight of the tiger knew the stranger was evident, and equally so that he was his enemy; what could mean ‘treachery, life without honour!’ Was the gallant cavalier she had seen that morning disloyal? impossible; but he was in danger, certainly, and from De Barre.—Perhaps he had not left the castle; should she not seek him and warn him? Perhaps, again, Sir Louis might mean some one else. It would be a bold thing for a maiden to run after unknown knights,—what would the countess think? She would return and ask her advice; yet

if she delayed so long he might be gone,—even now she might be too late. She took her resolution, flew along the corridor, down a flight of stairs and along a gallery, until she came to the hall of attendance, where calling a page, she asked him if he knew whether the knight who had that morning arrived at the castle, had taken his departure.

“Yes, my lady,” was the boy’s reply, “about a quarter of an hour since.”

“Are you sure, child?” inquired Iola.

“Quite sure, my lady, for I noticed his black plume to Roland, and said, that, of all the cavaliers I knew, Sir Louis de Barre was the handsomest.”

“It is not of him I would speak,” cried Iola, a ray of hope darting through her mind; “but of the knight who arrived since; he who bears a falcon on his bacinet.”

“I don’t know, my lady, I am sure; but I can see.”

"Go, quick, boy, quick," said Iola, "and tell him that I—no, the countess, wishes to speak to him again: conduct him to the yellow chamber, and ask him to wait there a moment."

The page returned in an instant, said the knight's foot was in the stirrup, but he had dismounted, and followed Roland to the yellow chamber.

Iola's heart beat as she approached the apartment. What should she say to him? She was not certain there were any designs upon him, and might be casting doubts upon the honour of a knight without sufficient reason. She half repented her haste; but reflection now came too late, as, before she was aware, she had opened the door and saw the knight approaching her.

"You must think me a forward maiden, sir knight," said she, "for it was I who requested your presence. I pray you to excuse my boldness in thus delaying your journey."

"Fair lady," answered Sir Reginald, "I am much honoured by your notice; can I serve you in aught?"

"Thanks, sir stranger, for your courtesy, but it was not for that I sought an interview with you. May I ask if you have many acquaintance in the castle?"

"None, lady," replied Courtenaye, "unless your countess may be deemed such; but it is at least fifteen summers since I saw her."

"Then, sir knight, I can inform you there is, or at least has been, one within these walls this morning to whom you are not unknown: I may not speak plainly, for perhaps I am mistaken; but from what I have heard I think you have a mortal enemy not far distant."

"Indeed!" cried Sir Reginald; "would then he were somewhat nearer that I might try a course with him."

"There are some arms, fair sir, methinks you would not care to use—Treachery—"

"Treachery!" said the knight, and he folded his arms and mused for a moment. "You will not tell me who, most honoured lady?"

"His plume is black, his steed is black, and I fear me—his heart is black." The knight started; then, as if afraid she had said too much, she added, "I may be misinformed; yet, sir knight, after the favour you did my mistress this morning, I could not allow her knight-errant to depart without warning him of the snares that surround him." The colour rose in her cheek as she spoke, her eye brightened, and her whole countenance became animated.

Courtenaye thought he had never seen so lovely a being, and he secretly blessed the danger, whatever it might be, which led her to take an interest in his fate. He replied, "I think I understand your allusion, and thank you much for bestowing a thought on so poor a knight as he of the falcon."

"Sir knight," returned Iola, "you are in haste, I will detain you no longer. God speed you on your way!"

The knight kneeled on one knee, and touching her hand with his lips, murmured his thanks again, and departed.

CHAPTER III.

Adversity can no more shake her, than the breeze which strips the oak of its leaves can tear up the trunk by the roots.

Tales of the Crusaders—The Betrothed.

THE tidings of which Courtenaye was the bearer, were sufficient to have overwhelmed any spirit less daring and ambitious than that of the Countess of Montfort,—so different to what her fond hopes had led her to expect. When first Charles attacked Nantes, she had flattered herself that from the strength of the fortifications, and the tried valour of the troops by whom it was defended, he would shortly have been obliged to raise the siege, and that from meeting with a repulse so early in the campaign, his

forces would have been disheartened, and many knights and men-at-arms might have been induced to join the party of the earl. Nantes was the first place that had sworn allegiance to him; it was there he had held the solemn court and feast on his accession to the dukedom, and the inhabitants had always appeared to consider his cause as so far superior in point of right to that of Charles, that if treason were found there—in the very capital of his province, where might she not dread it? The very city in which she now dwelt might be full of traitors! But this idea was too uncongenial with her natural disposition to be harboured for an instant, and her thoughts returned, in despite of herself, to her private griefs. Instead of being summoned to attend her victorious lord on the banks of the Loire,—to hear he was a prisoner, and in all probability for years to come, if not for life, filled her breast with sad and melancholy forebodings. She feared this was but the

beginning of calamities, for she knew he was much too valuable a captive to be lightly ransomed or exchanged ; she felt she had taken leave of him for ever, and with a heart full almost to bursting, she sought the retirement of her closet, and poured forth her griefs to Him whose ear is ever open to the prayers and lamentations of the friendless and unhappy.

She again perused her husband's letter, the last lines of which ran thus :—" I give you no advice, dear heart, in this our great strait, well knowing your best counsellor will be your own wisdom and your noble spirit. I can add no more, but that the bearer of this, a true and trusty knight, may not charge himself with a reply. Farewell ! God have you in his safe and holy keeping !

" From your loving husband,

" JOHN DE MONTFORT.

" The camp of Lord Charles of Blois,

This — day of —, 1342."

“ He shall not be disappointed !” she exclaimed, “ I will re-conquer his birthright, and the ducal crown shall once more encircle his brow.” She resolved to waste no time in useless lamentations, but, with a spirit that rose superior to adversity, determined to seek the advice of the wisest heads and boldest hearts in Rennes, as to the best measures to be pursued in this unexpected misfortune. She accordingly summoned several lords and knights; but the Bishop of Leon, the governor Sir Godfrey de Reyneval, and Sir Amauri de Clisson, alone obeyed her commands, for the rest were absent on different expeditions. These, however, attended without delay, for the mysterious arrival and departure of Sir Reginald de Courtenaye had thrown the inhabitants of the castle and its vicinity into consternation, and they were eager to learn the contents of the despatches, of which they doubted not he was the bearer: for, as one of his squires informed Sir

Amsuri de Clisson, "that stranger knight entered the city at the porte de Nantes, and he looked as though he had ridden since sunset."

They assembled in the council-chamber, where the countess soon joined them. Her eye was clear and calm, and her step firm as she advanced to the table and saluted them; but there was a slight quiver of the lip, when, putting the earl's letter into the hand of the bishop, she said, "I have this morning, noble sirs, received a despatch from my lord the Duke of Brittany, and wishing you to be acquainted with our situation, have requested your presence. Read it aloud, my lord, that you may judge of our position."

A physiognomist might have been interested in observing the different effect which the startling intelligence of the earl's capture had on the countenances of those present. The expression of the churchman's did not vary in the least; from long habit his features were so entirely under control

that it would appear he either had no passions, or that they were too deep-seated to be visible to mortal eye. He read it through in the same quiet silver voice with which he absolved a penitent, or condemned a poor wretch to a month's penance.

Sir Amauri de Clisson, a young knight who burned for renown, had scarcely patience to hear the conclusion of the epistle, but, grasping his sword, exclaimed, "To the rescue, my lords! the Earl of Montfort must not remain in the power of Charles or his wily uncle Philip. I advise that we march a troop immediately to Nantes, surprise the camp, and carry off our master."

The countess almost smiled at his youthful enthusiasm, and turning to the governor, asked what he would counsel. Sir Godfrey de Reyneval, a veteran warrior, whose brow was furrowed by age and scarred with many an honourable wound, fixed his eyes on the countess with a look of fatherly compassion, as he replied, "Dear lady, this stroke

is hard to bear, and much do I feel the melancholy condition of our gallant lord ; yet I cannot agree with Sir Amauri de Clisson in advising you to rush headlong to his succour. Most probably Charles' next advance will be to Rennes, for, having secured the person of the earl, of course his great aim now will be to possess himself of you, noble lady, and the Lord Julian ; and if we reduce the strength of the city as much as will be necessary to send a sufficient force to Nantes, we shall leave ourselves exposed to the risk of capture. I would recommend that we first fortify this place to the utmost of our power, and despatching messengers to the various cities which have remained faithful, acquaint them with the woful intelligence, and order them to raise a company of lances with which we can attempt the restoration of the earl to liberty."

"I have not yet had your opinion, my lord," observed the countess to the Bishop of Leon.

"Most honourable lady," he replied, "since you deign to ask my humble counsel, I will give it frankly; I confess, it leans most to the side of Sir Godfrey de Reyneval. I would advise that you and your son should for the present, at least, remain in this castle, but with everything prepared for a sudden departure; then, if Charles attack, or threaten to attack it, you may have time to escape to England and obtain protection and assistance from the restless and warlike Edward."

The countess with difficulty suppressed a look of scorn; but ere she could reply, Clisson exclaimed, "Then, my lord, I suppose you would leave our noble earl to his fate; or, is our illustrious lady to sue for aid at the feet of the proudest monarch in Christendom? I flatter myself our native force is sufficient to defend her, as well as to reinstate our sovereign in his rights."

"You are somewhat hasty, Sir Amauri, and

methinks you judge too arrogantly of our power," interrupted the bishop. "But what says our lady herself?"

"I thank you all, fair sirs, for your counsel, and will in part adopt the advice of each. I am resolved to remain here so long as by my presence I can give encouragement to the soldiers, and then proceed to the various towns whose weakness might induce them to surrender to the enemy: for if you imagine, my lord bishop, I would fly from the danger that besets my people, you are much mistaken; never shall it be said that Jane of Montfort feared death in her husband's cause. But should all our efforts prove unavailing, I am not too proud to solicit assistance from the King of England, all whose interests, both personal and political, would lead him to form an alliance against Philip of France. Thanks, brave Clisson, for your ardour in the support of our cause: you need not fear your sword growing rusty in its

scabbard, though, to attempt the rescue of my lord at present were madness; we cannot part with the troops necessary for such an expedition."

"Most noble countess," said the governor, "pardon me if I caution you not to expose lightly that life which has now become the hope and rallying point of Brittany. This castle would hold out long against Charles' most vigorous efforts; here you are safe, but I pray you not to run needlessly into danger."

"Not needlessly, sir governor; but if by my example I can instill courage into faint hearts, it is my duty to forget personal risk for the sake of those dear to me."

"I marvel much," returned the governor, "to see you, dear lady, who till now were occupied only with the cares and amusements suitable to your rank and sex, animated, by the knowledge of your lord's defeat, with the courage and daring of a warrior, instead of yielding to womanly complaints."

"Sir knight," answered the countess, laying her hand upon her heart, "my grief lies here; but, while I have so many true friends around me, I cannot give way to despair."

"God defend the right!" cried Clisson, and dropping on his knee as he took the countess' hand, "I swear to maintain the cause of the noble Duchess of Brittany, so long as I can lay lance in rest; and I place myself and my retainers at your grace's command to do with us as seems best to your wisdom."

"My brave Clisson," returned the countess, her colour rising as she spoke, "while I have such loyal knights as yourself, I may dare Charles to do his worst. My lord bishop," she continued, "I request you to offer up prayers and masses for the safe delivery of my lord from the hands of his enemies."

"Most assuredly, noble madam," answered the churchman; "but I hope your grace would not

prohibit me from donning the hauberk over my cassock : safe is the castle which the church protects."

"As you please, my lord; but methinks prayers are more fitting arms for the clergy than the battle-axe and the halbert. Sir governor, I will that you assemble our good townspeople; they shall hear from my own lips that I trust in their fidelity. The defence of the city and castle I leave to you, and I am sure they cannot be in truer or abler hands. My lords, I will detain you no longer." They then kissed her hand and withdrew.

We must now transport our readers from the castle of Rennes, and the society of the Countess of Montfort, to a far humbler abode. In a miserable hut, or rather hovel, on the outskirts of the city, rudely-furnished even in those rude times, an old hag sat crouching over the fire, and broiling some meat upon the embers.

She addressed her daughter, a pretty, modest-looking girl, about seventeen years of age, in no very gentle terms.

"Why don't you mind your spinning, you idle hussy, instead of carolling those ditties that never do nobody any good? Here's your father and Gaultier will be in from the forest soon, and be a-wanting their dinners, and you have not so much as washed the trenchers."

"Indeed, mother, I have. But look there," said she, putting a small silver piece into the old woman's hand, "see what *Sieur Jabot*, the wanderer, gave me for the hose I knit him."

"Have you been to the castle then, this morning, child?"

"Yes, mother, before you were up."

"Ah well, *Lisette*, you ought to do something for your living; God knows! you do little enough."

The poor girl could scarcely restrain a tear as she spread the table with a cloth made from

flax of her own dressing and spinning; but she had been so long accustomed to hear harsh and unkind language from her mother, that she made no reply, and in silence laid out the trenchers, white as the driven snow, and then taking her wheel, went to the door to watch for her father's and brother's return.

"How late they are to-day," she thought, as the minutes flew by, and no Bertram or Gaultier came.

"I wonder what's gone with your father, child?" muttered the old woman; "the sun has been high some time; if you were good for anything, you would go and see after him."

"I'll go directly, mother, but I did not like to leave you all alone."

"Oh! you thought I should eat all your dinner, I dare say, you greedy thing, but I can tell you it is quite safe." The latter part of the sentence was a kind of soliloquy, for Lisette had taken the hint, and was off in the direction of the forest.

The trees were just bursting into leaf, and

“ The attic warbler pour’d her throat
Responsive to the cuckoo’s note,
The untaught harmony of Spring.”

Although early in the year, the sun had sufficient power in the middle of the day to make shade agreeable, and she took her road down a lane, the banks of which, on either side, were covered with violets and primroses, scenting the air with a perfume far more exquisite than could be found on the toilette of the most recherchée Parisian belle. Lisette loved flowers, and she stooped to gather some as she passed along ; but was it that the violets did not smell so sweet as usual ? or had she ceased to care for them ? She threw them away as if unconscious of what she was doing ; her heart was heavy, she knew not why. A sort of melancholy foreboding came over her as she continued her way and still caught no glimpse of her father. In the present un-

settled state of the country, a thousand horrid ideas crossed her mind ; yet for thirty years he had gone daily to the forest and returned home safely, excepting once indeed she recollected he had wounded his leg very badly with his axe : perhaps he might have met with a similar accident now, and she hastened her pace until she came to the entrance of the wood. She wandered about for some time, not knowing which direction to take, until the sharp bark of a dog met her ear—“ Ranger! Ranger!” she cried ; the faithful animal came bounding towards her, and soon led her to the spot where her father was seated under a tree.

“ Oh, father !” she exclaimed, throwing her arms about his neck, “ what has happened ? we have been expecting you this hour past, and at last mother sent me to see after you. Where’s Gaultier, too ?”

“ Ah, my child,” returned the old man, “ you may thank God you see me again ; if it had not

been for a gallant cavalier, whom Providence sent to my rescue, they would have killed me."

"They? who, father?"

"It is a long story, and I must begin at the beginning or you will never understand it. We all—I mean the other foresters and myself—were hacking and hewing away, when one recollected there was a fair at St. Mary's, and off they all set, excepting Gaultier and myself. I thought my fair-days were over, and he said he did not care to go, so we stuck steadily to our work, till I thought I heard a noise as of horses trampling and arms clashing, so I stepped aside to see: when my boy called after me, 'Father,' says he, 'do you see those cavaliers?'—'Beahrew me!' said I, 'if I don't think it is Sir Robert Knolles, and some of his free companions.'*—'Very likely,'

* These free companies were bodies of men-at-arms, or robbers, collected from all parts, but composed chiefly of English, Normans, and Navarros; they rode over the coun-

said he, 'but that is nothing to you nor me neither, they can't want anything with us.'— 'Ah ! Gaultier, Gaultier,' I cried, 'don't be so positive, I've known them blood-thirsty hounds hang an old man up to a tree, for the nonce, as they called it, just for the pleasure of seeing him kick the air. Now I've no fancy to swing at the end of a branch, nor to see you do it either, so we'll hide ourselves before they come.' So saying, I got behind a tree, and pulled Gaultier after me ; but young blood is hot, and he did not like it. I managed to keep the dog quiet, but I quite forgot my poor ass." Here the old man drew his hand across his eyes : " Poor beast ! I did not think to lose thee so."

Lisette looked round bewildered ;—" But what, father ? Where is Gaultier ? Is he gone too ?" try in parties of twenty, thirty, or forty, meeting with none to check their pillage. Sir Robert Knolles was at one time their leader, and made the trade so profitable, that he gained by it upwards of a hundred thousand crowns.—FROISSART.

"Oh, yes!" said the old man with a deep sigh, "there is no more happiness for me in this world; I must carry my wood for myself now, and work for myself, too."

"Well but, father, do go on."

"Where was I? Oh! I recollect, we might have stayed there safe enough, and I shall always say so, but Gaultier would put his head out to see which way they went, and they caught sight of him, so one of them calls out, 'Hola there! younker, tell us the way to Baulon.' Gaultier answered civilly enough. 'Is that your ass?' says another. 'Let's see how you can ride; we'll make a knight of ye; give him a lance, and let us see what sort of a figure he'll cut.' I could not help, when they talked on this wise, just giving a look, but I only peeped; however, they saw me; for the first, whom they called Pierre, said, 'Why, here is old Don Greybeard, the father.' 'Come, young un,' said the other, 'we want a

few such as you, so up and ride.' Gaultier had a hatchet in his hand ; so said he, ' I 'll not ride ; if you touch me or my father, you shall taste my steel, by St. Hubert !' ' Oh ! if it comes to this, you shall ride,' said the other : whereupon he struggled ; but what could he do among so many ?—they mounted him, and carried him off ! Oh, Gaultier ! my poor, poor boy !"

" Then do you mean, father," asked Lisette fearfully, " that my brother is really gone—gone away with those wicked wretches ?"

" Yes, child, I do indeed."

" Oh ! father !"—and in an agony of grief she threw herself on the turf beside him.

" Well but, Lisette," said he, " you must hear the rest. — Don't you fancy they let me be quiet all this time ; no, they pulled me about, but they got little enough from me, for I had nothing to give them. I begged them to leave Finon, but they threatened to murder us both if I was not

quiet, and said they wanted him to carry the youngster, as they called Gaultier, for he was a brawny youth, and they could make a companion of him. They tied me to a tree, and made as if they were going to kill me ; for says one to another, ' dead men tell no tales,' and then they laughed. The whole troop did not wait for this, only two or three,—the rest went off with Gaultier.

" Just at that moment a knight rode up through a glade of the forest ; he soon saw what sort of folks he had to deal with, and what was going on, for says he, ' Leave that old man alone, my masters, or it shall be the worse for you.' ' And who are you ?' cried one. ' A true knight', answered he ; ' not a robber to make war upon a helpless old man.' I wished he had come up sooner, he might have saved my boy. ' Are you ?' said the freebooter ; ' then I'll try a pass with you.' He did not know his man, for the knight just ran his

lance underneath his gorget, and the man fell dead. This enraged the others : they were mounted, so the knight had something to do to parry their thrusts ; but he had got a good battle-axe, and he dealt his blows so cunningly that he made every one tell. His horse seemed as knowing as a Christian, for he wheeled and turned so that the knight was never surprised from behind. Thinks I to myself, if I were free I could do somewhat ; so after a little I slipped one hand out and cut the thongs that bound me ; I got hold of my hatchet, and coming behind one of them unawares, I threw it at him, and gave him such a blow on the back of his head as stunned him, and made him check his horse, which threw him on his haunches. By good luck I caught my hatchet as it fell, and the devil was in me I think, for I made no more ado but I hamstrung him : he fell, and rolled over the robber, who had no power to rise. All this time the knight was fighting

desperately with another of them, but he beat him off, and wounded him in his sword-arm. I believe they thought, as I do, that he bore a charmed life, for he was not hurt himself; and then those two rode off. Then the knight dismounted, and came to the one that was rolling in the sand, 'Will you yield yourself my prisoner?' said he. 'Never,' answered the robber. The knight was a bold one, for he let him rise, and they struggled for a little while; but, as I said, it was folly to think he could master him, and the knight thrust him through with his sword. Oh dear! oh dear!" cried the old man, "I can't forget it."

"Well, father, and what became of the knight, and what did they do with the bodies?"

"Oh! my child, the dead men lie there still, *and the horses too*. I grieved afterwards for killing the horse, but as I told you, the devil was in me, and prompted me to do it, I think. But my son, my son!"

“ Well, but the knight, father ?”

“ Oh ! child, I don’t think it was a knight ; I think it was St. Michael in the form of a knight ; for I don’t believe mortal man could do such things.”

“ Did he speak, father ?”

“ To be sure he did. When I blessed him and thanked him, he said, ‘ Never thank me, good man, but thank God and Our Lady, who sent me at such a lucky chance.’ ”

“ Did his eyes flash ?”

“ No, Lisette, he looked for all the world like another man, but I don’t believe he was one. His vizor was down, so I could not see his face, but I should know him again, I am sure.”

“ Where did he go, father ?”

“ Oh ! he vanished in the wood.”

“ And did he not bear a flaming sword ?”

“ No, but his crest was all on fire ; I saw it blaze when he stooped his head.”

"I dare say it was St. Michael, father," gravely observed Lisette; "God be praised for sending him! But, if you are rested, we will go home now, for my mother will wonder where we are."

The old man rose, but he was obliged to lean on his daughter's arm, for when he began to move he felt the effects of his unwonted exertion. To his great delight, a short distance from where they had been sitting, they saw the ass quietly grazing: "Oh, my dear lost ass," cried he, "I did not think to see thee ever again." His joy at his recovery made him forget his son.

"I am so glad he is safe," exclaimed Lisette, "for I am sure you had better mount him, father, and ride home."

"Thank you, my child, but he has a load of wood to carry, and I shall bear him down."

"I will carry the wood, I am sure I am quite strong enough."

“ You are a dear dutiful child, God bless you for it !” The old man mounted the ass, and in about half an hour they arrived at the cottage.

“ Bless me !” cried the old dame, when she saw them, “ where have you been ? What ! taken to riding like the gentry ? Here’s all Rennes mad, you never saw the like. Get your dinners and let us go to the market-place, for there’s the governor been and told all the people they are to meet, for the countess is going to make speeches to them, and I don’t know what !”

“ Why, what’s the matter ?” asked her husband.

“ Oh ! never ask me, you should have been here, and then you might have heard yourself.”

“ But, good dame, I can tell you I have been very near killed.”

“ Pity you weren’t quite,” muttered the hag as she went into the hut. She did not wait to hear about her son.

Their frugal meal was soon despatched, and they hastened to the market-place to learn the news. Rumour, with her hundred tongues, had been busy in spreading abroad the various reports relating to what had passed that morning in the castle. Some said, in answer to the inquiries of Bertram and his family, that the Earl of Montfort was killed; some that he had resigned the duchy to the Lord Charles; others again that the French were marching to Rennes. Many had had prophetic dreams, and seen strange sights, and heard unnatural sounds. Our friend Bertram willingly added to the number. He said, nay swore, St. Michael had appeared to him and fought a great battle single-handed against half a score of robbers in the wood of Rennes. Of course this information drew a crowd round him, and he proceeded to describe the saint's fiery crest and flaming sword; for either his memory or his imagination served him better than when

relating his exploits to Lisette; and even his armour too, he now said, had a strange unnatural glow; and, to crown the whole, after laying the robbers all dead around him, he sunk into the earth or ascended into the air, he did not rightly know which.

“Why, Gaffer,” said a rough boor, “your wonders beat mine hollow; but I am sure something strange must have happened. There’s Jean says he saw the devil himself this morning before it was light ride up to the castle, and get in, though the drawbridge was not down: he was mounted on a black horse, and Jean says he knows it was the devil because it could be nobody else.”

All these surmises were at length interrupted by the appearance of the countess on the battlements of the castle, holding her young son Julian in her hand, attended by the governor, her ladies, and several knights. There was an universal shout

and then a silence, as she signified her intention of addressing them.

“Men of Rennes,” she said, “I have this day heard that my lord the Duke of Brittany has, through the treachery of some on whom he thought he could rely, fallen into the hands of his enemies, and is now a prisoner of the Lord Charles of Blois. The news is grave, but let us not be cast down with sorrow. The Lord Charles has taken Nantes, it is true, and is now master of the person of the duke; but there are many fair towns yet left in Brittany, and though the Earl of Montfort cannot lead you to the field, I will, so far as I may, supply his place. I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have a spirit. Charles shall never break; so long as you are true to yourselves and to your country, the proud foot of the usurper shall never bend you to his yoke. Think not, because you have lost your lord, there is no chieftain left to Brittany;

behold his son ; behold the heir of Montfort ! Will ye let the last scion of such a noble stem linger out his days in a foreign prison, or be crushed to the earth by the machinations of his enemies ? No, I am sure ye will not. God and De Montfort be your battle-cry ! and may the right find bold defenders !”

There was a momentary silence, and then loud shouts rent the air, and cries of “ Long live the Earl of Montfort ! Long live our noble countess ! Down with the usurper ! Let him try his strength against our walls ! Shame on the people of Nantes !”

The countess wished to thank them for their zeal, and the governor made a sign to impose silence, but the words choked in her throat, she could only say, “ God bless you all !” and taking the arm of the governor she withdrew with her ladies.

CHAPTER IV.

His courage was guided with skill, and his skill armed with courage; neither did his hardiness darken his wit, nor his wit cool his hardiness; both valiant as a man despising death, and both confident as unwonted to be overcome. His feet steady, his hands diligent, his eyes watchful, and his heart resolute.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY'S *Arcadia*.

NEVER was simile more correct than that which compares man to a feather blown about by the wind of circumstance, now wafted by the gentle airs of prosperity, now torn by the rude blasts of adversity, yet always rising again, until the last gale hurries him to the bourne 'from which no traveller returns.' Uncertain of future events, he cannot rely even upon himself, and performs an.

action coolly and deliberately to-day, which yesterday he would have considered as little less than a crime. Yet could the veil, beyond which all is darkness, be rent asunder, and free will still left to man, how many great and noble as well as bad deeds would be prevented ! Selfish and calculating, he would constantly consider how his intended actions would bear upon himself and his own fortunes ; those generous bursts of feeling, those almost more than mortal traits of heroism, would be extinguished for ever. Yet again, how many, could they be favoured with the magic mirror of futurity, would exclaim with Hazeel, " Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing ? "

Such might almost have been the question of Courtenaye ; had a vision been vouchsafed to him, and could he have beheld himself the bearer of despatches between the Earl of Montfort and his countess, he would have declared the thing

impossible, for to his noble nature the bare idea of treason, or any approach to it, was as the nettle to the hand of the infant, a stinging poison.

Bred amidst the din of arms, the principles of honour and chivalry had been early instilled into his youthful mind by Sir William de Courtenaye, a knight who lived not long to enjoy the renown he had acquired in defending the cause of the Count of Flanders against his rebellious subjects. He died soon after his return to Paris, when Reginald was not more than twelve years old; but, young as he was, he had attracted the attention of Margaret de Valois, and her penetrating judgment discovered qualities which required, she thought, only a little care and culture to ripen into virtues, such as were prized highest in those days of honour and high principle. She determined to keep her eye upon him, and made him page to her son Charles; but she early im-

pressed upon his mind that he had neither rank nor wealth, for Sir William de Courtenaye had dissipated his patrimony in the Flemish wars; the path of honour was, however, open to every one, and the youthful hero wanted small stimulus to inspire him with the desire to follow it.

“ He nor of castle nor of land was lord,
Houseless he reap'd the harvest of the sword ;”

and that sword he was resolved should do more for him than ever weapon had done since the days of Charlemagne. He received the honour of knighthood from the hands of Charles of Blois, and won his spurs at the siege of Mont St. Quentin. When the war for the succession of Brittany broke out, he gladly obeyed the summons of his master to seek fresh laurels in that fertile province; the right of Jane of Penthièvre to the possession of the duchy he thought unquestionable, and was therefore doubly eager for her and her husband's cause, though possibly, had it been un-

tenable, early attachment might have made him little less ardent for Charles's success.

Many and conflicting were the thoughts that passed through his mind as he journeyed on from Rennes. The beautiful dark-eyed girl flitted like an apparition before him. Never had he seen her equal—nor in Flanders, nor among the fairest flowers of France. She had evidently been alarmed at the idea of danger besetting him; yet the rich glow of her cheek, as she informed him of his peril, and her diffident manner, while it added an indescribable charm to her beauty, enhanced the favour by evincing a degree of hesitation in conferring it.

He had almost worked himself into a belief that their destinies were linked together by some secret spell, when he heard loud voices and the clashing of arms. Always eager to try the temper of his sword, he spurred his horse, and arrived at the scene of action at the critical

moment when a party of free companions were threatening to murder the poor old wood-cutter, Bertram, as related by himself in the last chapter. At first he thought this was the danger against which Iola had warned him; and glad to have finished the affray in so satisfactory a manner, he hastened onward, anxious to regain by speed the time he had thus lost.

He pondered, as he went, on the fate of the noble countess, whose lofty bearing and demeanour he could not refrain from comparing with that of the timid though amiable Jane of Penthievre. With such a woman for his partner, Charles might indeed, he thought, be secure of his rights. Then came the heavy reflection of how his absence from the camp would be regarded; for as he had left the whole of his slender retinue behind him, it could not be supposed that he was gone in search of adventures,—a very common occurrence in those days. That Charles

for an instant should doubt his faith, gave him a bitter pang ; but his meditations soon relapsed into a more agreeable channel, and the maid of Rennes engrossed his whole soul. He endeavoured to recall every look, every word she had spoken ; each glance of her eye was worth a knight's ransom. But would those eyes be turned with favour upon him when she learned that he was engaged in mortal strife with the party of her mistress ? That was a question he did not care to answer ; but as hope was a far more frequent and favoured guest with the falcon knight than despair, he rode on, pondering and musing on his lady-love, and building castles in the air, regardless of the gradually relaxing pace of his horse, until the jaded animal fairly paused, and roused the knight from his reverie, at the moment when he imagined himself receiving the prize of valour from the hands of his fair unknown. Cruel, unsentimental Quentin ! how

couldst thou demolish thy master's airy fabric, and crush his scheme of happiness in the bud ?

" Ah !" exclaimed Sir Reginald, " I had forgotten thee, my trusty steed ; thou art not in love, and twenty leagues last night, and half as much to-day, including our amusement of this morning, are, I must fain allow, sufficient to make thee wish for a stall and well-filled manger. We must seek for a hostel somewhere near, for methinks I should not despise a stoop of wine."

The knight rode on gently, looking carefully on either side of the road, if he might not discern an inn, or some passenger who could direct him to one. He had not proceeded above half a league before he descried a small unpretending building situated a few paces distant, whose sign, a fierce-looking Saracen, swinging in mid-air, proclaimed good entertainment for man and beast ; and the sagacious animal, as if aware his

labours were about to cease, pricked up his ears, and trotted smartly to the spot.

Sir Reginald knocked at the door with the pommel of his sword ; but no one appearing, he repeated the blow, and, after a short delay, it was opened by the inn-keeper — a man who had passed the meridian of life, but whose person, bearing a strong resemblance to one of Pharaoh's fat and well-favoured kine, indicated that his days had been tolerably prosperous. His nose bore ample testimony to the potency of his liquor, and his eyes, small and long-shaped, had a natural expression of humour lurking about them which it seemed impossible for him to control, though the rueful cast of the lower part of his countenance, and his doleful voice as he asked Courtenaye what was his pleasure, belied his otherwise contented aspect.

“ Why, refreshment for me and my horse,

to be sure, man," said Courtenaye, dismounting.

"I beg your honour's pardon; will you please to come in, sir, and I'll tell the boy to take your horse to the stable.—Here, Giles! Giles!" But no Giles appearing, the landlord himself took the bridle: the knight, however, followed, to be quite assured that Quentin was well tended.

"'Tis a handsome horse, sir, this of yours," observed the landlord, as he ungirthed him. "I am in luck, I think, to have two such beasts in my stable in one day; for you must know, your honour is not my first visiter this morning: some two hours ago a knight halted here with a horse as like yours as one pea is to another, except that he had one white foot."

"Indeed!" cried Courtenaye; "and what was the colour of his armour?"

"Black, sir, black; but his silver was white enough," added he, throwing a sidelong glance

at his auditor. "I don't care for money now though, nor for anything else;" and he heaved a deep sigh.

Leaving Quentin to his breakfast, they returned to the house; the knight entered the kitchen or public room, and maine host proceeded to furnish his table with the best his larder afforded.

The door of an inner room was half open, and Courtenaye's curiosity being attracted by a low murmuring noise, he perceived a poor woman lying on a low pallet in the last stage of weakness; a friar was sitting by her. The light, which was shaded from her face by a curtain, fell on the strongly-marked features of the priest, who was apparently listening with intense interest to the confession of the dying penitent. He was so much turned from Courtenaye, that his profile only was visible; his cowl had fallen on his shoulders, and displayed a finely-formed head, whose thin locks, spared by the tonsure, were

sprinkled with grey: his shaggy eyebrow overhung a deep-set hazel eye; his nostrils were distended, as if he could scarcely breathe, yet his lips were so violently compressed that they were almost colourless. He groaned faintly as he laid his emaciated hand on the arm of the invalid, and whispered consolation and peace to her departing spirit.

The landlord soon returned with provisions, consisting of salt mutton, barley bread, and a flagon of wine, which he placed on the table; but Sir Reginald's attention was so riveted by the spectacle before him, that he scarcely noticed his entrance.

"I had forgotten," said the landlord, closing the door: "there lies my good dame, who has lived with me, rough and smooth, many a long year; but they told me she was in a mortal way, so I sent for a priest to shrive her. Take a sup of this wine, sir knight; you'll find no better in Brittany, I've warrant."

The knight acknowledged its excellence, and invited his host to partake of his own cheer. The minister of Bacchus did not want much pressing, but raising the flagon to his lips, did not put it down until it was empty.

"It may seem odd to your honour, but, for the life of me, if I take up this same cup, I can never leave go of it until I have seen the bonny face of St. Hubert at the bottom: he looks more merrily and cheerily when it is emptied, always, to my thinking, than before it is filled! Ye'll have ridden far, I take it, sir," he continued, seeing the advances the knight made in his cold mutton.

"From Rennes this morning, mine host; and I would fain see Nantes before nightfall."

"That ye'll never do, so you may as well stop a bit longer, fair sir, and I'll fetch you some more wine." He left the room not quite so steadily as he had entered, and had not been long absent when the friar passed into the apartment,

"How fares your penitent, father?" asked Courtenaye.

The friar shook his head. "She rests in peace, my son." His voice was hollow and subdued, as if he stifled strong emotion.

"Father," said the knight, "you look as if you had need of refreshment; will you not partake of my repast?"

A faint glow overspread the pale sunken cheek of the confessor as he replied, "Not for me, my son; I must work out my sins with fasting and penitence, but the cravings of nature will be heard, so I accept a portion of your bread with thankfulness."

"So small a morsel!" exclaimed the knight, observing that what he broke off was scarcely the size of his finger.

"It is enough," returned the holy man, "it is all I have had since yesternight, and I shall taste no more before to-morrow's sun."

"And are all your days like this, father? Me-thinks an army of friars, such as you, could be kept at small charge."

The host at this moment returned with the wine, but seeing the priest he hastily put it down on the table, and covering his face with his hands, exclaimed, "I know it all, I know it all! God rest the soul of my poor Maude! She'll never be vexed more, poor thing! to see my love for St. Hubert;" so saying, he took up the cup again, and relinquished it not until he was again blessed with the sight of the saint's rubicund visage.

"Stop, stop," cried Sir Reginald, "that stoop was brought for me, and I am in haste; so, good mine host, you must needs part with some of your favourite liquor, and then aid me to saddle my black steed."

The landlord obeyed, though with reluctance, and with a tottering step followed Courtenaye to the stable.

“Methinks,” said the knight, “if you were to live for a se’nnight like yon holy father, it would be no worse for your cellar and somewhat better for yourself.”

“Who? I? brave sir, it would kill me outright. He lives upon charities and water; but he is the best leech in all the country, and if anybody could have saved my dame, he could.”

His horse being ready, Courtenaye mounted him, and threw a silver piece to the landlord, but could not resolve to depart without bidding adieu to the priest and craving his blessing.

The spirits and strength of Quentin had been much restored by his halt at the Saracen, and he bore the knight along as gaily as if carrying him to the tournament; but his rider was more pensively inclined. Why should the death of an old woman affect him so deeply? He had seen numbers fall on the battle-plain without emotion. He did not consider that it was not death itself, but

death in a view to which he had been unaccustomed, that weighed upon his spirits; the old priest too, and his parting look, haunted him, and made him almost forget his fair vision. He rode on, but it was long after nightfall when he reached the camp, where Eustace St. Valery met him with eager expressions of delight.

But we must leave the knight to the care of his faithful squire, and proceed to inform our readers of some material circumstances which had occurred during his absence, and which Eustace took great credit to himself for not mentioning to his master, until he had enjoyed some hours' repose.

The Lord Charles of Blois was in his tent playing at chess with the Lord Louis of Spain, when a page entered, and informed him a knight desired an audience on matters of high moment.

"Bid him wait," cried Charles.—"Check to your king, my lord."

The Spaniard slowly and gravely covered the check. They went on playing in silence for some time, when the page again made his appearance.

“ My lord, may it please your grace——”

“ It does not please my grace.—It is your play, my lord.”

The game continued ; at length Louis, in his deep-toned voice, thundered out, “ Check-mate !” it was the first word he had uttered for two hours, and looking up he observed the page standing as immoveable as a statue behind his master’s chair.

“ How is this, brother Charles ? are you never without an attendant ? or do you fear treason, since you became possessed so honourably of the Earl of Montfort ?”

“ Ha !” exclaimed Charles, looking round, “ what wast thou going to tell me ? ’twas thy brawling tongue lost me my game.”

“ A knight, my lord, waits without, requesting to see you alone for a short hour.”

"Then I will depart," said Louis; "don't forget my thousand crowns, cousin Charles!"

"What has happened that should make your highness imagine my memory has suddenly deserted me?" returned Charles petulantly, for he piqued himself on his skill at chess, and considered Louis as an unworthy opponent; he was the more nettled therefore at being vanquished, and received his visiter in no very amiable mood.

"Who art thou? and what is thy will with me, sir knight?" he exclaimed, throwing himself back in his chair.

"My lord," answered the knight, in the softest voice he could command, "my name is Louis de Barre, and my business is of life and death, as its import is treason, and its object one whom your grace has hitherto counted faithful."

"Treason!" cried Charles, "since yesterday I have heard of nothing else; I must dine, sup, and sleep upon treason soon, methinks. You tell

me your name is Louis de Barre, but I do not remember to have heard it before among my cavaliers. I say again, who art thou?"

The knight looked cautiously round, as if he feared an eaves-dropper; then lowering his voice almost to a whisper, "My lord," he replied, "you see before you a penitent, one who is now convinced of his errors in having borne arms against the lawful sovereign of Brittany—who wishes to prove the sincerity of his repentance by informing your grace of a treason he has discovered. But, my lord, I must request one thing—that my name may be concealed. It is an ungracious office at best, and I fear even now, when you hear the author, you will return me small thanks for my zeal."

Charles, who was naturally of rather a suspicious temper, readily gave the required promise, and De Barre proceeded to relate that he had strong reasons for doubting the faith of Sir Regi-

nald de Courtenaye; he knew that he had been the bearer of despatches from the Earl of Montfort to his consort: how he obtained his information he could not disclose even to the Lord Charles. But——”

“Tis false, sir knight!” interrupted Charles with a vehemence that made him start. “Reginald de Courtenaye is true as steel; I have known him from his boyhood.”

“I feared me,” said De Barre, recovering himself, “that my first act of loyalty would be ill received; but I expect not your grace to credit me without proofs. Ask the Earl of Montfort himself, my lord; taken by surprise, he could scarcely be able to conceal the truth.”

“Unfortunately, sir knight, our prisoner is no longer in the camp: we despatched him this morning, under a strong guard, to our uncle Philip, who, we doubt not, will give him lodging in the Louvre.”

“ I have better evidence still,” said De Barre, “ in Sir Reginald’s absence. Send for him, my lord ; if he obey your summons, I confess my ignorance and his innocence.”

“ Do the knights, then, of the Earl of Montfort never leave his camp without informing him ? Is he so despotic a master that they never seek adventures without his cognizance ? or are they such timid hares that they dare not quit their form ?”

De Barre bit his lip, but he compressed his passion, and replied—

“ In times like these, my lord, a knight is not used to scour the country alone and unattended : when he leaves the camp, his retinue follows him, that as his power is stronger, so his booty may be richer ; but, if you inquire, you will find Sir Reginald de Courtenaye has left his train in the camp, and is not accompanied even by a single squire.”

Charles was silent ; then bending his head

forward, and fixing his eyes upon the knight, as if he would read his inmost soul, said—

“ You seem mightily anxious, sir stranger, to depreciate our hitherto faithful servant in our good opinion.”

“ Oh, that such motive should be ascribed to me !” exclaimed his informant, clasping his hands, “ when nought but zeal for your highness’s safety prompted me to the odious task. I grieve that I have displeased you ; but forget, my lord, what I have urged : take no measures to the prejudice of Sir Reginald ; admit him to your councils, as of heretofore ; but if misfortune attend you, you will haply then repent you took no heed to the counsel of a true, though newly-acquired follower.”

“ Leave me,” said Charles : “ if we find your account correct, our grateful thanks will be your’s ; but if your surmises prove false—” He stopped.

“ Our Lady grant they may be !” said De

Barre ; and he retired to watch the success of his first attempts against Courtenaye's fortune.

Left alone, Charles threw himself on a couch, and revolved in his mind Courtenaye's recent deportment ; but in vain—he could find no reason for doubting his loyalty. The idea of treason seemed to stupify him, yet he had not the courage to send for him, lest his absence should confirm the knight's accusation. The bell for evening prayer at length roused him from his lethargy. By this time at least he would be returned ; so, resolving to confute De Barre, he, after vespers, despatched a messenger to Courtenaye's tent, desiring his presence.

Eustace St. Valery, to whom the man applied, though he was ignorant of the real object of the knight's absence, had penetration enough to discover it was a secret mission, and therefore met the messenger with a doleful countenance, but with

a look of well-feigned surprise, and asked him if he had not heard of the wound Sir Reginald had received at the taking of the city.

"No, by my troth!" answered the page.

"Then tell our gracious lord," returned St. Valery, "that my master has not left his tent all day; I cannot even let him stir out of bed."

"At least inform him of my errand."

St. Valery retired for an instant; but soon returned, saying—

"I have called him, and he answered me not, so I trust a gentle sleep will restore him."

"Umph!" said the messenger; "you take precious good care of your master, methinks. Am I to tell the Lord Charles that the squire St. Valery, in his wisdom, does not think it fitting to convey his commands to Sir Reginald de Courtenaye, because he is asleep, forsooth?"

"Be not so free with your tongue, you saucy varlet! The Lord Charles is too reason-

able to ask a cavalier to enter his tent, when he cannot leave his own."

"Ha! well; give me a sup of wine to drink to thy master's recovery, and good e'en to you."

St. Valery quickly complied with his request, and right glad was he to have got rid of him so easily.

"Well, what reply to my summons?" asked Charles rather anxiously, as the messenger returned.

"My lord, Sir Reginald de Courtenaye was sorely wounded two days since, and is a prisoner to his bed, in the custody of his squire Eustace St. Valery, who will not suffer him to quit it."

"But did the squire convey my orders to him?" said Charles impatiently.

"No, my lord; he was asleep."

"Asleep!" muttered Charles; "pray God it may not be his loyalty that sleeps. Begone!" he added to the page, seeing he still waited.

In vain did Charles that night address himself to repose ; the bitter thought of Courtenaye's falsehood — for the wound and the slumbers were, he doubted not, “ weak inventions ” of St. Valery—galled him to the quick. Never would he put faith in man again ; “ I would have laid my life upon his truth ! ” he cried. Fatigue at length overcame him, but his sleep was feverish and disturbed : he dreamed he saw the Earl of Montfort and Courtenaye talking together in the most amicable manner upon the walls of Nantes ; and when he upbraided him with disloyalty, “ Pay me the thousand crowns I won from you at chess ! ” he fancied he heard Courtenaye say. For answer, Charles thought he aimed a bolt at Courtenaye, and that he fell. Charles started up in his bed, exclaiming, “ Oh ! have I killed thee ? ”

The sudden motion, and the appearance of a page from the outer compartment of the tent,

who, on hearing his master's voice, asked if he needed anything, quite aroused him.

"No, boy; I did not speak, did I? Yet stay: send D'Albret with his rote; I cannot sleep to-night: bid him tune his voice to a soothing measure."

D'Albret, the favourite minstrel of Charles of Blois, was soon seated by his couch. Much as he loved music, he yet wondered at the taste that could prefer it at that dead hour to the sweets of repose. He played a few wild chords as a prelude, and then sang as follows:—

Softly breathe the liquid numbers,
Hush'd be every sound of strife!
Fairest visions fill his slumbers
Through the murky hours of night!

Sing of spring and opening flowers,
Spring whose breath invites repose;
Guide his feet to fairy bowers,
Be his couch the fragrant rose!

Pause! he sleeps—cease, cease the song,
Minstrel, for thy task is o'er
Till to-morrow's glorious sun
Rouse him to the battle's roar.

He finished his lay, and to his inexpressible delight saw that the last notes fell unheeded on the leaden ear of Charles. Laying his instrument on the ground, he threw himself down beside it, and was soon sleeping as profoundly as if couched on a bed of down.

In a far different manner was the night passed by Sir Reginald de Courtenaye. He wanted no troubadour or provençal to woo his slumbers, and would have slept still longer perhaps, if St. Valery's impatience to inform him of Charles's message, had not tempted him to rouse the knight soon after dawn.

"You said I was wounded!" cried Courtenaye angrily; "by the rood! I did not know I had a liar in my tent. Could not you have told the truth, Eustace, and said I was absent you knew not

where? But that romancing spirit of thine prompts thee to make a tale out of every trivial circumstance!"

St. Valery coloured deeply, and cowered beneath the severe look of his master; but, recovering his voice, said proudly, "I told no lies, fair sir: I said not that you were wounded,—I only asked Charenton if he had not heard of your wound? He told me to inform you of his errand; I said, I called you and you made no answer. I did not think there was any need to say it was because you were ten leagues off and could not hear. I said too, I hoped a gentle sleep would restore you; and are you not restored by it?"

Courtenaye could scarcely suppress a smile at St. Valery's ingenious method of saving his conscience from the burthen of a lie. "Well, well," he said, "I must forgive thee for thy zeal, but aid me now to don my cloak, for I must repair to Charles's tent."

"Oh! then the truth will out," cried St. Valery; "let me at least bind up your arm as if you were hurt."

"No, no," said Courtenaye, "I should make but a poor dissembler."

St. Valery knew that it would be as impossible to alter his purpose, as to attempt to turn the torrent from its course; so he urged his request no farther, and in silence attended his master to the Lord Charles's tent.

Charles's first emotions on seeing him were surprise and pleasure, but he commanded himself, and in a cold tone said; "I am sorry, Sir Reginald de Courtenaye, that you should have exposed yourself thus early to the freshness of the morning air, after the *severe* wound you received a short time since. I had not heard of that mischance until yesternight, and I fear you have endangered your health by thus obeying my summons."

“ My lord,” answered Courtenaye, “ my wound, though not of the flesh, lies deep, and you alone can prove the leech to heal it.”

“ You speak riddles, Sir Reginald ; were you not last night slumbering in your tent when I sent for you ?”

“ No, my lord ; at that time I was some half dozen leagues from hence. Lord Charles, I care not to deceive you ; I am but just returned from the Countess of Montfort, to whom I conveyed a letter from her lord, informing her of his captivity.”

Charles looked as though he could scarcely comprehend this open avowal of treason :—“ And by whose command, Sir Reginald de Courtenaye ?”

“ By the command of gratitude and ancient friendship,” replied Courtenaye.

“ You brought an answer back, I doubt not ; and may I ask when you intend setting out for

Paris to convey it to your new master? Had you waited a few hours, you might have saved yourself a useless journey, for the Earl of Montfort is now on his route to the capital, to take up his abode for a season in the Louvre."

"My noble prince!" exclaimed the knight, "and can you for a moment listen to the base insinuations of those who would seek to make you believe Reginald de Courtenaye faithless! My tale is simply this. The unhappy earl asked me to find a trusty messenger, who would charge himself with a letter to his lady. I said no traitors could be found in our camp; but when I thought of the countess' grace and favour to me in my early youth, though I would not have given the task to another, I undertook it myself, on the express condition that my service should then cease. I refused to bring a reply, as I knew not but that she might plot her husband's escape, (for I was ignorant of his intended removal to

Paris,) and should any mischance have occurred, I could only have looked upon myself, as I fear you have considered me, a traitor."

The delight and joy which overspread Charles's countenance was unfeigned, as he grasped the knight's hand and cried, "I knew it, I knew it; I said thou wert true as steel. Pardon me, my friend, for having for an instant suspected thy truth, yet hearing you were absent from the camp, and your squire saying you were wounded and could be seen by no one, confirmed my wavering fears. But, thank God and Our Lady, thou hast cleared thyself nobly from all imputation of disloyalty. Doff thy cloak and tell me something of thy adventures, and how the countess looked on receiving your somewhat mortifying intelligence."

CHAPTER V.

Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably.

Much Ado about Nothing.

RENNES having being placed in a posture of defence, and the citizens appearing thus disposed to maintain their allegiance, the Countess of Montfort had time to look around her, and observe what towns most required encouragement. She found that her presence acted as a charm upon the soldiers and burghers; men who were bold before, under her eye became heroes; and cowards (for even the lion-hearted countess numbered some cowards among her followers) were ashamed of their timidity, and were afraid to show their fear; men dared not shrink from the

danger that was braved by a woman. She advised with the prudent old governor, Sir Godfrey de Reyneval, if it were not better to leave Rennes to its own resources, and proceed to Vannes, remaining at the different towns through which she must pass, one, two, or three days, as she might find expedient. Sir Godfrey assented to her proposition, only recommending her not to take up her residence at Vannes, but to prefer Hennebont ; as it was better fortified, nearer the sea, and its port, Brest, defended by a strong castle. To this the countess agreed, and the day being fixed upon, preparations were actively, though quietly, made for her departure.

“Thank goodness !” cried Blanche, when Iola informed her of their intended journey ; “anything for a little change, I am sick to death of this stupid place. I only hope the countess will not wish to hurry when she is once on the road ; for my part, I like travelling leisurely, particularly if one has a good escort.”

"That is, provided Sir Amauri de Clisson is our guardian knight," observed her friend.

"Do not look so askance at me, Mistress Iola; Sir Amauri de Clisson is a good knight, and I like him: but I could tell a tale of you, perhaps, you would not care to hear. Who is it that admits unknown cavaliers to *tête-à-têtes*, I wonder?"

Iola coloured; the image of the Falcon Knight had constantly haunted her since that memorable day, and she had several times doubted if she had not overstepped the bounds of maidenly decorum in allowing her interest for his safety so far to overcome her natural diffidence as actually to prompt her to solicit a private interview, when she scarcely knew him, and was even ignorant of his name.

"You need not blush so deeply; there is nobody to admire you now but me. Worse and worse," cried Blanche, as the rich blood

rushed with redoubled violence to her cheek and temples ; “ if you looked thus when you addressed your gallant *protégé*, his heart must have been of colder steel than his harness if he did not throw himself at your feet. Tell me, Iola, did he swear eternal gratitude ?”

“ No, indeed,” she answered rather indignantly ; for not being quite sure if she approved her own conduct, she was the more jealous of Blanche’s criticism : “ I do not understand you. I heard from the jester that the knight’s life was threatened ; I therefore informed him. He thanked me, as any courteous cavalier might do, and that was all.” The simple relation of the circumstance seemed to give her confidence, and she began to think there was nothing so very indecorous in what she had done.

“ Well well ; but did he not vouchsafe his name ?”

“ Not to me,” replied Iola ; “ I know no more of him than you do ?”

"That would not satisfy me ; I like a knight to have a name to boast of."

"Like Sir Amauri de Clisson, for instance."

"How you harp upon Sir Amauri de Clisson ! I am sure I do not care about him."

"Do not say that, Blanche ; and why should you be ashamed of confessing your partiality for a brave soldier, who, you know, thinks no damsel equal to the little fairy Blanche, particularly when he is such a favourite of the countess ?"

It was now Blanche's turn to blush ; but Iola taking no notice of it, she gladly dropped the subject, and asked when they were to start.

"At sunrise the day after to-morrow," answered Iola : "I shall not be sorry when the time arrives, for I long to breathe the fresh air again."

"Oh !" cried Blanche, "here comes that odious Lalala ; he can have nothing to say to me, so I shall be off ;" and away she scampered as if running for her life.

Iola thought the best mode of defence was to commence an attack; she therefore told the fool, before he could speak, she was sorry she could not attend to him, but she was particularly engaged: and, without waiting for a reply, left him quite amazed at their sudden disappearance.

“This is what I call po-lite,” he said to himself, when he had recovered from his surprise; “a gentleman knows, no matter how, that two ladies are alone together; he thinks to make them a little more cheerful by his so-ci-e-ty, and the moment he shows his face, away they both run—oooh! So, we are to begin our peregrinations on Thursday. I wonder if the governor is glad or sorry? If I were he, I should be glad enough to get rid of the women, but I should be very sorry to get rid of myself. A regiment of Lalalas would scare the French; and how we should save our arrows! for they would

be afraid to look round if they once caught a glimpse of my ears—oooh! eeeh! I'll make the grooms give me a horse, though, that I can ride. I hate those broad-backed beasts they always choose for me: I'll go and fish for myself; the foremost dog catches the hare." Saying this, he repaired to the stable.

The preparations, in the mean time, went on very zealously: no one was more eager than the little Lord Julian, to whom an expedition of this nature was an event of great importance; and he was urgent in his entreaties that he might carry his lance himself, to defend his mother from any attack of the enemy.

The day of departure at length arrived. A tear stood in the eye of the brave old governor as he took the countess' hand at parting, and entreated her not to forget her own safety in her anxiety for that of others. "Remember," he said, "my dear lady, the eyes of all Brittany.

may, of all France, are upon you ; you are now our only rallying point. Oh ! preserve yourself for the sake of your almost orphan boy."

" I will, I will !" she cried ; " God bless and keep you, sir governor."

The governor advanced to assist her into her saddle, for the countess spurned the more effeminate mode of conveyance of a litter ; but he yielded the post of honour to a younger and more active knight.

The cavalcade now began to move. ` It was not numerous, but the knights and their followers were most of them well armed and well mounted. It consisted of about one hundred lances ; fifty formed the vanguard, the rest were in the rear, and the countess and her ladies occupied the centre, as being the most secure from surprise ; not that any was apprehended, as Charles, they knew, was still before Nantes. The Bishop of Leon, Sir Amauri de Clisson, and several other knights, were con-

stantly at the side of the fair travellers, endeavouring to beguile the tediousness of the way with stories of their adventures in Spain, Italy, or Flanders—of battles, and sieges, and combats, and rescues; for the dames and damsels of that age, accustomed to hear of wars from their infancy, would have considered any anecdotes tame and uninteresting, that did not tell of perils and dangers, wounds and death.

“What ancient building is that I see among the trees?” asked the countess, soon after they had left the town of Rennes.

“It is the Chateau de Roubigny, madam,” replied the Bishop of Leon, “and belongs, or did belong, to the earl of that name.”

“Roubigny?” repeated the countess; “it is a new title to me, I have not heard of him: but, whoever he may be, he appears to have much neglected his lands; there is such an air of desolation and wildness around them.”

“ His is a singular story,” returned the churchman.

“ Then, I pray you, relate it, my lord,” cried Blanche; “ I love marvellous tales.”

“ It is more melancholy than marvellous, perhaps,” said the bishop. “ The Earl of Roubigny, when simple Sir Albert de Roubigny, loved—deeply, devotedly loved, a fair young damsel, daughter of a brave Flemish knight, and was beloved by her in return. But his father was crafty and ambitious; and as the Lady Matilda would receive only a small dowry, he declared his objection to the marriage. Knowing his son’s disposition, instead of violently opposing it, he artfully drew him into the society of the Lady Celestine de Vaux, a rich and beautiful heiress, at the same time causing reports to the disadvantage of the Lady Matilda to reach his ears. In a moment of desperation Sir Albert offered his hand to Lady Celestine. They

were scarcely united when he discovered the falsehood of those malignant tales, and from that moment showed a dislike, almost approaching to abhorrence, of his wife. She bore him one son; and shortly afterwards, the earl dying, Sir Albert succeeded to the title.

“ Strange as it may appear, the affection which was wanting for the mother, displayed itself in bursts of foolish fondness for the son, who in character resembled his parent, and whose overbearing temper caused itself to be felt by all in the castle. When he was in his twelfth year, the countess died of a broken heart; and on being freed by her death, the earl immediately, espoused the lady to whom he had been previously attached. Their happiness, however, was of short duration, for she died in giving birth to a son. This melancholy event roused all the morbid feelings which her sweet disposition had softened, though not eradicated; he refused to

see the child for whom he had paid so dearly : it was sent from home, and soon afterwards died."

" Poor little thing !" said Iola ;—" it was a blessed release, however, to be taken from such a father. But what became of the eldest son, sir bishop ?"

" The earl and his son resided in the castle until the latter had attained the age of manhood ; but there were frequent disputes between them, for, having been indulged to the last degree from his infancy, the young heir could not endure contradiction even from his father. The end of my tale is sufficiently mysterious to satisfy even you, Lady Blanche ; and although I questioned the old seneschal, whom I formerly knew, I could never quite understand it : all I could obtain from him was, that one night they had a dreadful quarrel—that the son left his paternal halls, declaring that he would carve out his own fortune ; and, whether from grief or some other

cause, for there were strange reports, the earl also died."

"Then, where is the young Earl of Roubigny now?" asked the countess.

"I know not, my lady. The old man still retains the castle, as he is convinced, he says, his lord will one day return to claim it; and, troth, if he arrive not soon, he will find himself heir to a ruin and a wilderness."

"How long is it since he left?"

"About ten years," returned the bishop; "they say he went to join the crusade against the Moors of Granada."

"Singular," said the countess, "that I should never have heard this before."

"I am not much surprised," said the churchman; "it is so old a story that I should not even have mentioned it, if you had not asked me."

"I wish, Sir Amauri de Clisson, you could

make it convenient to ride on the other side of the countess," cried Blanche; "you see my palfrey cannot endure your charger: he lays down his ears, and I quite expect will throw me soon."

"Not while I am near you, fairest Blanche; rest assured I will protect you from all danger."

"I can take care of myself, sir, I am obliged to you; he is easily managed when you are away."

"Why will you be so cruel as to drive me from you? He will go quietly enough if you do not constantly check his rein: there, give him his head a little more."

"What's all this?" cried the fool—"quarrelling? I thought you two were as fond as turtles!" at the same moment thrusting his horse between them.

He was mounted on a tall, narrow, long-backed piebald, and, from his short legs and long

body, looked almost as if standing in the saddle. His frightful and ungainly figure alarmed the palfrey, who started off; and Blanche, now really frightened, screamed for help. Sir Amauri de Clisson was at her side in an instant, and, in spite of her independence, right glad was she when she saw his hand upon her bridle-rein, and without any opposition suffered him to lead her back to her place.

"How is this, Blanche?" asked the countess, who had witnessed the rescue, but had not observed the attack.

"That stupid Lalala, madam, frightened my horse, and he started, and——"

"I understand you; he ran away, and Sir Amauri brought him back, for which you are very much obliged to him."

"It was all Sir Amauri's fault," returned Blanche, with a pouting lip. "Lalala had some jest for me, I suppose, and the knight

was riding so close that he could not come near me." She looked round for Clisson as she finished her sentence, but he was gone; and now she began to fancy he was really displeased. A cloud veiled her usually sunny features; she endeavoured to rally her spirits, and look and talk as if quite at her ease; the attempt, however, was unsuccessful, and she was fain to accept the company of Lalala, whom she hated, seeking to forget herself and her offended knight.

The party halted at Mordelle a little before noon. Happily they had not relied on the resources of the town for refreshments; if they had, by far the greater number must have fasted. They waited only until the provision-waggons came up, and then lords and ladies, valiant knights and gentle dames, sat down to a repast, which a modern epicure might have turned from with disgust, but which a ride of half a dozen leagues served to make the countess and her companions

regard with far different feelings. After dinner the countess declared her intention of proceeding to Pléan that night. Blanche looked for Sir Amauri de Clisson to assist her to remount, but he was nowhere to be seen; she was obliged, therefore, to accept the aid of Sir Guy de Bournay, an officious gentleman, who fancied himself always a great favourite with the ladies.

"Iola," said Blanche, when they arrived at their destination for that evening, "are you not tired? I think our first day's journey has been a very dull one."

"No, indeed," returned Iola; "I have been very much amused by many tales the Bishop of Leon and Sir Amauri de Clisson have been relating to the countess and me."

"I am glad you found the knight agreeable. I wish you good night, Iola."

"Good night," returned her friend, and they were both soon buried in forgetfulness.

The countess, by the advice of her lords and knights, resolved not to remain at Pléan, but to proceed to Josselin. Blanche's heart beat quick, when, with the first break of the morning, she was summoned to attend her mistress. Sir Amauri de Clisson was so much engaged with the countess, that he had neither hands nor eyes for any one else, and she was again obliged to accept the services of Sir Guy de Bournay. Iola appearing a few moments afterwards, Clisson, who had established his mistress in her saddle, advanced, and requested leave to perform the same service for her. She looked round for Blanche, but observing her already mounted, concluded she was the third lady to whom he had played stirrup-knight that day; her astonishment was much increased when he entreated permission to ride by her side. Convinced there was something wrong, she granted his request hesitatingly; her curiosity was soon satisfied by Sir Amauri saying, "The Lady

Blanche, I believe, prefers the society of Sir Guy de Bournay to mine, as she says I frighten her palfrey ; it used not to be thus."

Iola, instantly perceiving that Blanche, for her amusement, had been coquetting with Sir Guy, endeavoured to bring about a right understanding ; but her labours were ill requited, for she was accused by Blanche, on their next meeting, with occupying the knight so entirely, that he had not time even to attend to the commands of the countess.

They passed two days at Josselin, and then went on to Vannes, which was in good order and well garrisoned ; the countess remained a week in that city. During her stay, the lords and knights residing there feasted her and her ladies most gallantly. It gave Blanche time to recover her temper with Iola, and to become better friends than ever with Clisson. They entered Hennebon the thirteenth day after their de-

parture from Rennes, having met with no adventures, nor any more serious accident, than Lalala straying from the party, losing his way, and not rejoining them until they had nearly arrived at Hennebon ; when he rode up, wearied and hungry, for he had been obliged to put himself on a fasting system, having no money to buy provisions, and finding none to purchase if he had, or to steal if he had not. He declared they might travel alone another time, for he was tired of journeying, and should for the future remain within the gates of the city.

CHAPTER VI.

With gallant pomp and beauteous pride
The floating pile in harbour rode;
Proud of her freight, the swelling tide
Reluctant left the vessel's side,
And raised it as it flow'd.

ANONYMOUS.

THE governor of Hennebon, Sir Oliver de Spinefort, advanced to the gates, and with much state and ceremony introduced the countess and her followers into the city, and delivered up to her the keys of the castle; these she graciously returned to him, and suffered him to conduct her, the Lord Julian, and her ladies, to the apartments prepared for them.

“The remainder of this day,” said she,
“shall be devoted to repose, but to-morrow,

sir governor, I request you will present me with the accounts of your numbers, your resources, and the quality of your troops."

"Your orders, madam," returned the governor, "shall be implicitly obeyed, and I trust your grace will find that the garrison is not in a state to induce you to regret the honour you have done us, in resolving to take up your residence here. Since I have had the high distinction of holding this place for the Earl of Montfort, it has been my ardent desire and ambition to make it in every way worthy of his favour, and consequently of yours.—Is this the young Lord Julian?" he continued; observing the child; "he bears a strong resemblance to the earl; yet allow me to remark, madam, his nose is very like that of the Count of Flanders, your brother, with whom I had the honour of serving many years since."

"Indeed!" said the countess.

This single word froze the wits of the poor

governor, who, had he but known himself, might have been not only a very worthy man, but really liked and respected. He wanted neither courage nor prudence ; was brave in the field and wise in the council, when his opinion could be obtained ; but unfortunately, he imagined himself gifted with the powers of rhetoric, and related the simplest event with so much circumlocution, that the governor's speeches were dreaded almost as much by his own party, as his battle-axe and long sword were by the French.

“ Doubtless, madam, you are fatigued by your long and tedious journey, but you will find the air of Hennebon particularly salubrious ; I imagine its vicinity to the sea gives it an invigorating quality. To-morrow, then, I shall have the honour to attend you.”

“ If you please, sir governor ; I wish you a good evening.”

The following day the countess examined the

reports of Sir Oliver de Spinefort. The garrison was not very large, but he assured her he could depend on the fidelity of all the troops; she, however, determined to call a council, and resolve whether she had not better despatch a lord or knight to Edward of England, and request assistance from him, as it would be impossible for her to hold out long against Charles, aided by all the power of France.

As soon as her wishes were made known, many were candidates for the honour of the embassy. Sir Guiscard de Buysson alleged his long services, and residence at the court of England, consequently his knowledge of the temper of the monarch, and how he might most easily prevail on him to grant supplies to the Bretons. Sir Aymen du Flume had gold, he said, which should be entirely at the disposal of his mistress; and if he had heard aright, the English were not averse to the precious metals. Many more put in their

claims; when the countess, to the astonishment of all present, and the annoyance and vexation of some, called Sir Amauri de Clisson to her and said, "You have not spoken much this day, Sir Amauri; but I want not words from you to be assured of your readiness to serve us. I appoint you our ambassador at the court of England; you have a strong head, a bold heart, and a ready hand; see only that your valour be tempered with discretion. Make ready to start as soon as may be, ere Charles can have advice of our movements; and we will then give you instructions and letters for the English king."

Clisson was overcome with joy and pride at this public mark of the countess's favour, and promised that to the utmost of his power he would plead her cause with Edward.

The countess had not long retired from the council, when she was informed the Bishop of Leon desired admittance to her presence. "Well,

my good father," she said on his entering, "you are not come to chide me, I hope, for my choice of envoy; if so, I will spare you the trouble, for I have quite resolved upon sending Clisson."

"Not so, fair lady," returned the bishop; "yet what I have to suggest, I fear, you will like still less. You are going to request succours from the King of England; doubtless he will not be averse to grant us assistance against his ancient enemy the King of France; yet, if we could strengthen our claim upon him by a family alliance, or the prospect of one, methinks he would the more readily send us a supply of men and money."

"I do not understand your drift, my lord; the Duke of Brittany has no kinswoman to bear the name of Plantagenet, nor has Edward any brother to whom she could be united if he had."

"I am aware of that, my lady; but Edward has sons and daughters. What think you of sending

our young Lord Julian with Sir Amauri, and making conditions for his betrothal to an English princess? If the proud monarch feels he is fighting to obtain the ducal crown for his daughter, it will mightily increase his ardour in our cause; in all probability his supplies would be doubled, and our forces being strengthened by his troops, we need be under no apprehension from Charles or King Philip: the Lord Julian, too, would be placed in much greater security in London, than he can possibly be here."

"There is much truth in what you say, my lord bishop," returned the countess; "yet to part with my child, is a blow for which I am scarcely prepared: his father is a prisoner; if now I lose my boy, I shall be indeed bereft."

"It is for his safety, dear madam, I would advise a short absence; you know he will be well cared for in the gallant court of England. I entreat you not to decide without consideration."

The churchman knew he had touched the right chord in mentioning the advantages that would accrue to her son. The ambition of the countess was not a selfish ambition ; her most ardent desire was to see her husband firmly established on the throne of Brittany, and to feel that the crown would descend without opposition to his heirs ; in order to attain this end she considered no personal sacrifice as too great. After a moment's hesitation she answered the bishop, " I submit, my lord ; Julian shall accompany Sir Amauri de Clisson to England ; I desire you to inform him of the important charge with which he is to be intrusted. Yet stay, my lord—the marriage. If I remember, the King of England has but two daughters, one of whom is yet in her cradle."

" It is of her I would speak, the Princess Mary : there is one advantage in her youth," added the bishop, almost forcing a smile ; " it is not pro-

bable she will raise any objections to her father's commands."

"Well, be it so," said the countess; "and I trust she will be as docile to her husband when arrived at years of discretion."

The bishop, having obtained his point, soon after took his leave. "Iola," said the countess to her attendant, who was engaged at an embroidery-frame in the same room, though too far off to have distinctly overheard the conversation between her mistress and the churchman; "I have resolved to send Julian with Sir Amauri de Clisson to England—to choose a wife," she added smiling; "a union of our families will of course much strengthen the interest Edward will take in our defence. But tell me, how looks Blanche on the prospect of her knight's departure?"

"She is rather sorrowful on the subject, as they happen to be friends just now," replied Iola; "I dare say, though, they will quarrel again before Sir Amauri leaves us."

Iola was right. Blanche had pictured to herself a very tender parting, for she wished to be remembered among the gay dames of merry England ; but her evil genius, as usual, presided, and when Sir Amauri entreated for a tress of her silken hair, that he might be constantly reminded of her, his look was so serious, that, instead of moving her compassion as he had intended, she burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. The knight was rather disconcerted, but he was accustomed to her waywardness, and refrained from noticing it until she had recovered herself.

“ If you stand thus the picture of misery and despair,” she said at length, “ my features will never regain their composure. Designs the gallant ambassador to present that rueful visage at the court of England, to move the sympathies of the islanders, or to leave its shadow as a precious legacy to those who might perchance be too joyous in his absence ?”

“ Oh ! Blanche, Blanche, and will you always suffer your raillery to prevail over your better nature ? We part to-day ; God knows when we may meet again.”

“ Really, Sir Amauri, I do not need a homily ; if I did I could go to the bishop. The English, I am told, are a thoughtful people : I dare say the countess selected you for her representative, because she considered you would best suit the grave demeanour of the English court.”

“ You are mistaken there, my fairy queen ; no one is fonder of shows and tournays than the gallant Edward, and Philippa of Hainault. I doubt not I shall see many demoiselles with whom to compare you.”

“ Well,” she replied, “ and there are many bold knights in this town of Hennebon, and many more may join us ere the summer is over.”

“ Very probably,” said the knight coldly ; “ I understand you. I once foolishly flattered my-

self that Blanche de Maronnay took some interest in the fortunes of Amauri de Clisson, but I am undeceived. Adieu !”

“ Adieu, Sir Amauri !” She fixed her bright blue eyes upon him, the appeal was irresistible, he was riveted to the spot.

“ Let us part friends at least,” he said.

“ You will not forget me quite then,” whispered Blanche, creeping up to him, and laying her fairy fingers on his mailed arm, as if to detain him ; “ you shall have the hair ;” and she hastily cut off a lock.

“ It shall wave on my casque,” cried the knight, seizing it, “ and I defy the beauties of England to display a brighter or more lovely one. Farewell once more, I must no longer delay.”

She buried her head in his arm — “ God preserve you !” she said, in a voice scarcely audible.

“ Fairest, dearest ! I must be gone.” He kissed her, and tore himself away.

The knight found all prepared for his departure: the gallant ship that was to bear him and his precious charge far away from Brittany, her sails loose and streamers flying, only awaited his orders to raise her anchors and take advantage of the breeze, which, the captain assured him, would carry him into the open sea before night-fall if he could start directly. The river was dotted with boats and small craft, and the shores crowded with spectators to witness the embarkation of the infant lord, and the countess's ambassador.

"It was a goodly sight," says Father Bertrand, "to behold the countess and her ladies, clad in robes of marvellously fine needle-work, smiling and encouraging the knight in his enterprise: many glorious cavaliers, too, who came down to the shore, wishing him outwardly all manner of success, though some in the blackness of their hearts would not have been ill pleased to hear of

his discomfiture; for so gallant a knight as Sir Amauri de Clisson must needs have some enemies who grudged him the favour of the countess.

“ The knight himself was of a cheerful countenance, though, when he looked towards the ladies, methought he seemed cast down, as if one was absent whom he would fain have seen among the group. He was gorgeously apparelled in his armour and surcoat, which was of cloth of silver, open at the sides, and emblazoned with his arms, Azure, a dexter-hand clenched proper, coupé at the wrist, and erected between three towers Argent: his motto was, ‘ Follow Fortune and fear not.’ He wore on his head a light bacinet, and from his crest (a tower Argent) there waved a lock of long fair hair, the love-token, I suppose, of his mistress. Then came the young Lord Julian, and I admired how he could wear so bright a visage, for he smiled as the sun through an April cloud, but the lightsomeness of

his fancy made him not think of the perils of the sea: he was beauteous to look upon, and I wept in my heart to think so fair a flower must blossom in other lands.

“Some such sorrowful thoughts seemed to weigh upon the spirits of the countess, for the big tear watered her eyelid as she beckoned Sir Amauri de Clisson to her, and laid the young child’s hand in his; and her tongue would hardly wag at her bidding, for her voice almost failed her when she said, ‘I give you, Sir Amauri, all that God has left me of most precious,—see that no harm befall him. Tell our royal cousin, I have no dearer pledge than my little child, and bid Philippa remember that, as I have but one to bear his father’s name, he has all the tender thoughts she is forced to share among so many.’ Then she stooped down and kissed him, and it seemed as if her lips were sealed to his forehead, so long did they remain there; he put his arms

round his mother's neck, but the captain and sailors pressing them to depart, the countess raised her head, and cheeringly bade them not delay. Sir Amauri paid his devoirs, and then they embarked, amidst the noise of the trumpets, the shouts of the people, and the cries of the sailors. I watched the ship until a bend in the river hid her from my eyes, and then I returned to my home, but I could not be mirthful any more that day."

CHAPTER VII.

They raised the bleeding Otho, and the leech
Forbade all present question, sign, and speech.

Lara.

ABOUT this time the Lord Charles of Blois called a council, and the Duke of Normandy, the Lord Louis of Spain, the Duke of Burgundy, and the other principal barons and knights who had resolved upon restoring his consort to her inheritance, being assembled, they took into consideration how they might best dispose of their forces. The men were growing weary from inaction, and the knights sighing for new enterprises : they were wasting their time before Nantes ; for as Charles observed, though they had gained the capital, and

taken the Earl of Montfort prisoner, yet much remained to be done ere he could consider himself master of Brittany. All agreed upon the necessity of leaving Nantes ; but the next point in debate, whither they should bend their steps, was not so easily decided. The Duke of Normandy advised their going to Vannes. Burgundy, on the other hand, mentioned Rennes, as the countess was there, and of course they should endeavour to secure her person. “ You are mistaken, my lord,” said Charles of Blois, “ I have received secret information that she is gone to Hennebon ; nevertheless, my opinion inclines towards the siege of Rennes, as that is the second town in the duchy, and if we are masters of that, as well as Nantes, Hennebon will offer comparatively few difficulties to our arms.”

Little opposition was made to this proposal, and accordingly, the following day, the troops were ordered to be in motion. The French camp now

presented a far different scene to that of the last few weeks : squires, pages, grooms, armourers, all were in requisition ; and woe to the unlucky wight who had suffered himself to be allured by the charms of luxury and ease to neglect his master's arms. There was no quarter now if the bow-string were damp, or the lance-head unpolished, or the battle-axe rusted. The tents were raised, and many friendly words and fair promises being interchanged between the soldiers and the townsmen, the army was once more on the march.

The last troop had descended the hill, the last plume had vanished from the sight of the few stragglers still left in the camp, and the last sounds of the martial music faintly lingered on the breeze, when De Barre called for his horse and prepared to follow them. He had of late grown so moody and silent, that his squires hardly dared to speak to him, and no sooner was he in the saddle than they

fell back to a respectful distance. De Barre was indeed alone ; there was no one of whom he would have made a confidant in his schemes, for he durst not confess even to himself the extent of his projects. Ambition, and hatred of Courtenaye, were his ruling passions, and as they by turns took possession of his soul, they almost smothered, if they did not sometimes quite extinguish, the love he once felt for Iola. His acquaintance with Courtenaye was not of recent date, in years long past, when Sir Reginald was but a boy, he had deeply injured him by discovering papers he would fain have kept concealed.

De Barre never forgave him, but he could not revenge himself upon a child ; his hatred, however, rather increased with his years, and he eagerly sought the fair-haired boy among the cavaliers of Charles of Blois or the Duke of Normandy. Though he wished to provoke him to mortal combat, his pride would not allow him to confess the

reason. Fortune, however, so far favoured him, that they met near one of the gates of Nantes, but the fickle goddess aided him no farther; she abandoned him then at his utmost need; for his desperate eagerness to unhorse Courtenaye, threw him off his guard, and he received a wound himself, not of much consequence eventually, but sufficient to disable him at the time, and he would have been taken prisoner, if one of his squires had not ridden up at that instant, turned the bridle of his horse, and carried him off the field. The disgrace attending a rescue of this nature rather added to his bitter feelings against Courtenaye, and he determined to ruin him if possible.

A second time thwarted in his endeavours to diminish his favour with Charles, a less rooted hatred might have abandoned the idea of vanquishing so powerful a rival; but revenge, like a coy mistress, whose favours seem enhanced in proportion as they are difficult of attainment, urged

him forward, and he resolved that he would overthrow Courtenaye or die in the attempt. Yet even while ruminating on these things, ambition whispered more flattering hopes to his ardent enterprising soul.

At length his reflections broke forth into words: "Ah! if Charles could obtain the dukedom, and I could acquire interest with his wife, he might then admit me to his councils; for all the world knows, in spite of his pretences to the contrary, she sways his vacillating mind, mild and gentle though she be. I had well nigh shaken his faith in Courtenaye when I was an absolute stranger to him—I will court his favour; Courtenaye shall ruin himself from his bluntness, while I shall rise on his disgrace." He mused awhile, then again burst forth:—"All men are mortal; Charles has no heir, if he were in the grave there would be no one to maintain the duchy against John of Montfort; Jane would not have the power

to resist the countess ; she might marry again,—whom would she select ? why not—— ?” He could not even to himself finish the sentence. “ Would not her people’s choice determine her’s—I will make myself popular, the Bretons shall like me—shall adore me. Yet soft, Charles may live many a year yet—Oh ! no, no, horrible thought !” he exclaimed, as if something too dark for utterance crossed his mind. “ Yet all stations in the battle are not equally secure, the post of honour is the post of danger—Charles may be wounded—Jane may be left a widow—I might win her favour ; she is to join the camp in a few days, I know ; perhaps——”

Here one of his squires ventured to interrupt his meditations, by observing that the sun was getting low, and asking if they had not better quicken their pace. Without reply, the knight put his horse to the gallop, and seemed now as anxious to make speed, as he had

before been careless of advancing. He rode on, overtook the army, mingled with the crowd of lances, and was one of the first the next day to congratulate Charles on his arrival before Rennes.

There was nothing very remarkable in the early part of the siege of Rennes; the Lord Charles of Blois surrounded it on all sides, and much harassed the citizens; but Sir Godfrey de Reyneval, the governor, knew that he could hold out a long time, and therefore did not despair of compelling Charles to raise it. About a week after his first attempts against it, there was one day a slight confusion and bustle in that part of the camp where his tent was pitched, occasioned by the arrival of Jane de Penthievre, who, finding that the siege was likely to be of long continuance, had determined to be no longer separated from her husband, but to share his fortune, be it good or bad. Her resolution occasioned much surprise, both at the court of Paris and in the camp, for

she was cast in a far different mould from her rival the Countess of Montfort. Her natural disposition was timid and affectionate ; she was plain in her person, and rather under the middle size ; her complexion was pallid, but her mild blue eye, more accustomed to melt in tenderness than to fire with indignation, interested more in her favour, than could have been expected from her want of beauty and of figure. The part of the camp least liable to assault, was assigned for her accommodation, and being now able to see her husband every day, and watch the progress of his arms, she seemed perfectly contented. She lamented over the wounded knights whom she continually saw borne along by their squires and valets ; but that such might be Charles's fate, never seemed to occur to her imagination. The presence of many women, especially of a nature so timid as her's, might have been a great obstruction to the schemes of their lord ; Jane, however, was

more reasonable,—though she loved her husband's society, she asked not for it when graver duties demanded his presence. She liked to gaze on the brilliant cortège as it left the camp in the morning to seek for enterprise; she liked to feel she was near him who was struggling to make her Duchess of Brittany, and she desired nothing more.

De Barre found little difficulty in acquiring her regard, by pretending great ardour in Charles's cause, and by a thousand little attentions to herself. She soon considered him as the most courteous knight in the French camp. His manner, too, to all the other barons and knights, was altered; he no longer shunned their society, but rather sought it; his apparent frankness and open bearing gained the confidence of the unsuspecting Courtenaye, and he even confessed to him his attachment for the dark-eyed maiden, who appeared to be the favoured attendant of the Countess

of Montfort. De Barre listened with unfeigned interest to his tale, for he felt there was another door opened to his vengeance.

In the mean time the siege continued, and each day added to the fame of De Barre; he was really brave, and his generosity in dividing his spoils among his followers, contenting himself with the glory of success, caused him to be much beloved by those under his command. His name resounded from one end of the camp to the other; nothing was heard of but the exploits of the gay, gallant, handsome cavalier. Even Charles, who in the first instance was rather prejudiced against him, from his accusations of Courtenaye, began to think he had wronged him, when he saw how warmly he interested himself for the Falcon knight now he was acquitted of treason; how anxious he appeared to make the *amende honorable* for his suspicions, and how eagerly he defended the cause of his new master.

Patient and persevering as he was, De Barre now, however, began to think it time to profit by his control over himself, and to reap some solid good from his machinations. He recognized many of the knights defending Rennes, but was unknown to them, having altered his crest from a tiger to a demi-lion, and being careful, in all communications with his ci-devant friends, to have his vizor down. One of the gates was usually defended by Sir William de Cadoudal, a large and powerful man; one blow from whose battle-axe was sufficient to cleave the best iron of Bordeaux. This gate, in Charles's hearing, he professed his intention of attacking, as, if that were carried, he said, they might soon make an entrance into the town, and he should be the first to mount the walls of Rennes. He said this, well knowing that Charles would never patiently endure the idea of an inferior knight assuming the glory of the conquest, and that Sir William would, on

the first appearance of an enemy, sally forth and attack him. He was not deceived ; Charles invited all to follow who listed, but declared he must command the assault. De Barre resigned, though apparently with great reluctance, and prepared to weave fresh toils for his victim in case these should fail to ensnare him.

It happened exactly as he could have wished ; Sir William de Cadoudal, observing the approach of the French knights, left the city, and distinguishing Charles by his white plume and silver lilies, soon singled him out from among the troop. They fought desperately for some time, but Charles could do little more than parry the blows of his gigantic antagonist ; for, though a good swordsman, his lance was no match for the threatened battle-axe of Sir William. He was almost overpowered, when Courtenaye suddenly appeared at his side ; too late, however, to save him, for at that instant he fell senseless.

Sir Reginald was on foot, having just had his horse killed under him. The Breton knight, according to the ideas of honour in those days, instantly dismounted: he was scarcely on the ground, when Courtenaye struck a blow at his head with such force as nearly overthrew him; but he recovered himself, and aimed a stroke at Courtenaye, which must have proved fatal, but that he slipped under it, and, throwing his arms round Cadoudal, wrestled with him. The struggle was severe, but it terminated favourably for Courtenaye; for, though Sir William had greatly the superiority in weight and power of limb, Sir Reginald had the advantage in pliability of muscle, and coiled around his adversary in such a way that he was nearly suffocated, and yielded himself his prisoner, rescue or no rescue.

Courtenaye's next thought was of Charles. Exhausted by the contest, he was not sorry to find his master had been carried off the field,

and he anxiously followed to ascertain if he had been indeed too slow in preserving that life which was dearer to him than his own.

Charles had been conveyed to his tent ; he had received a wound in the side, and, falling to the earth, was stunned by the weight of his own armour. His knights and squires were endeavouring to staunch the blood when Courtenaye entered : at the same instant De Barre appeared.

But we must leave the wounded prince for a moment, to relate how the knight of the Demi-lion, as he styled himself, had been employed since he and Charles had separated. Although he scarcely doubted but that the Lord of Blois must sink under the assault of the Breton, yet, as it was possible he might be only wounded, he determined to take measures accordingly to secure the widowhood of the unconscious Jane.

There was a leech in the camp, whom he had completely won to his interests by lavishing fa-

vours upon him with an unsparing hand, and by pretending the greatest deference to his opinion. Until he knew De Barre, this man was poor and friendless, but in him he found a protector, and a generous patron; and it appeared to enhance the value of his gifts, that they were presented in secret and without any ostentation. De Barre seemed, indeed, so little anxious to be famed for charity, that he frequently told his *protégé* he should discontinue his donations if he found they were bruited abroad. The aid of this leech, Raoul Seil, he now condescended to solicit; and no sooner, therefore, had Charles left the camp, than he repaired to his humble dwelling.

He found this disciple of Esculapius sitting at a table, or rather rough board, supported on tressels, cutting what seemed to be the skin of some animal into shreds, which, from time to time, he put into an earthen pot that was simmering on the fire. The bones of a rabbit were

in a trencher on the same table ; and opposite to him, on the ground, sat a miserable half-starved cat, who mewed piteously when her master approached the fire, as if she would remind him of the still-expected meal.

The leech himself appeared in scarcely more flourishing condition : his lack-lustre eyes almost started from his head, as he leaned forward upon hearing the knight's approach ; his hair hung down upon either side of his lank visage and upon his shoulders, and, from the contrast, made his complexion look still more sallow and unearthly. His long thin fingers were like those of a skeleton with a skin stretched over them ; his dress was something between that of a friar and a peasant, and of the coarsest material.

" Good morrow, Raoul Seil," said the knight on entering, in his most conciliating tone ; " always engaged, I see, in some experiment for the

good of mankind. What may be the object of thy present employment?"

"I seek, fair sir," returned the leech, "to form a healing ointment for wounds and hurts, for in this murderous siege many a brave knight is lost for want of skill and unguents."

"Thou must be more known, Raoul; this miserable tent is not a fit dwelling for thee; but I thought I had provided thee with means to improve thy lot."

The leech shook his head, and with a smile, which was intended for one of delight, but which was in reality so horrible that it almost made De Barre shudder, he took a small box from under the table, and opening it, showed it to the knight half full of angels and crowns;—"They are all here," he said; "I would not part with one of your honour's gifts."

De Barre felt provoked at wasting his gold on so miserly a wretch, but he was too necessary to

him at this time, to show any symptoms of anger ; he therefore only replied—" Well, Raoul, I can, and I will do more for thee one day ; thou hast studied the secrets of medicine, and talents like thine are too rare to be lightly considered ; thou hast been too long buried in obscurity ; but the day is not far distant, when those crowns shall appear to thee as dross."

The man fixed his eyes upon the knight and gaped with astonishment.

" Yes, I promise thee no more than I am able to fulfil. Thou hast various drugs, hast not thou ? some that will cause a sleep like death for a time ?"

" Yes, noble sir ! I have one, but it is costly, the secret is known but to one other leech in France."

" That is, this physician instructed thee, and said no one else was acquainted with its virtues, but thou knowest not how many may have learned it since."

Raoul Seil looked doubtingly on him, as if he suspected Sir Louis of having more information than he chose to confess.

“Hast thou that medicine which can soothe a man to sleep on earth, and make him wake in heaven?”

“No, no,” he answered hastily.

“But thou hast various applications for wounds, all your salves do not heal them equally soon?”

“It depends much on the nature of the hurt; some are more angry than others.”

“Thou dost not always succeed in thine art even when most anxious: hast thou that which would make a wound grievous, and cause the patient to be heavy and wish for death? Tell me truly; I seek not to betray thy secrets, thou hast ever found me thy friend.”

“I have, indeed, my honoured master:” then lowering his voice, which was faint before, “I have a powder which, mixed with an ointment

I know of, would prevent a sore from healing, and would burn the sick man with fever, that no herb nor potion could afterwards restore him to health."

"Such is the drug I want, and thou must administer it if I call upon thee so to do."

Raoul Seil stood aghast, and trembled from head to foot.

"Fear not, I will not harm thee, if thou art sure and secret; but mark my words: if by look, or word, or sign, thou betrayest my confidence, I will hang thee on a tree, and the eagles *shall* pick thy bones as closely as thou hast those of the rabbit now beside thee. I know more than thou thinkest; how died Sir John de Vaux?"

The latter part of the knight's speech did not contribute to calm the agitated nerves of the wretched man; he felt he was in his power, and remained speechless.

“Nay, courage, man,” pursued Sir Louis; “no one knows that dark story but myself, and no one ever shall, if thou art faithful now. Haste thee, and make up thy *healing* salve, don thy best mantle, and in one quarter of an hour from this time walk through the camp near the Lord Charles’s quarters; if thou seest me, take no notice unless I call thee.”

De Barre then proceeded to the place of rendezvous, and on seeing Charles carried by his knights, entered the tent; it chanced at the same moment as Courtenaye, as we have before related.

“Is his wound mortal?” Courtenaye eagerly inquired of one who was standing by the prince.

“I know not,” replied the knight, “I am no leech, would that I were.”

“Is there none at hand? Can no one fetch a leech?” cried Courtenaye.

“I will,” answered De Barre; “I do not doubt but I shall presently find one.” He left

the tent, and soon returned with Raoul Seil, who, faithful to his appointment, was waiting for him at the distance of about a bow-shot. "I have had the luck to meet this worthy man, who I know has performed many wondrous cures."

The leech looked timidly round, and when he saw on whom he was to practise his black arts, it required all the encouragement of De Barre's presence, to give him strength to approach the couch. In a quiet subdued voice he requested all who were not necessary to attend on his grace, would leave the apartment. He was obeyed, and soon found himself with only Charles, De Barre, a page, and Courtenaye, who would not be prevailed upon to quit his master. He then gravely examined the wound, and in answer to Courtenaye's anxious inquiries, shook his head, but said, with care perhaps he might recover; he had a sovereign remedy for all hurts and

bruises, and if Sir Reginald pleased he would apply it.

Courtenaye agreed, but advised his administering a cordial to restore the senses and spirits of Charles. The leech did as he was ordered, and then recommended the prince to repose, desiring none should watch by him but one page, as rest and quiet were what he most needed. He left a draught which was to be given to him on waking, and said he trusted he should find him better on the morrow.

De Barre, relying on Raoul Seil's fidelity, did not attempt to follow or question him; he chose rather to appear only slightly acquainted with the man who had deeper knowledge of his villanies than any one breathing.

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh ! weep not, lady, weep not so,
Some ghostly comfort seek ;
Let not vain sorrow rive thy heart,
Nor tears bedew thy cheek.

The Friar of Orders Grey.

BUT where was Jane de Penthievre all this time ? Was she careless of her lord's misfortune ? or was her fear of wounds and blood so great, that she sickened at the thought of approaching him in his present state ? Nothing like this would have detained her. The fineness of the weather had induced her to prolong her morning's excursion, that she might enjoy the balmy air and

scented gale at a distance from the dust and noise of the camp. On her return her ladies espied a messenger, whose lengthened visage betokened some calamity. Happily for her, she was engaged in watching the flight of a falcon which one of her knights had just slipped for her amusement ; the news, therefore, was broken more gently to her by a female tongue, than it could have been by the rough soldier. She uttered a shriek on hearing it ; “ My lord sick, wounded ! is he dead ? ” she cried, “ tell me truly.”

“ Nay, my lady, only grievously wounded.”

“ I must to him directly.” She was on the point of galloping off without considering even where he was, or whether her sudden appearance might not hasten that event she so much dreaded. She was so bewildered that her women had some difficulty in persuading her to rest a moment in her pavilion, and in soothing and tranquillizing her sufficiently to listen to the messenger, while

he related the nature of the accident, and the orders of the leech that Charles should not be disturbed.

“ But I must, I will go,” she exclaimed ; “ I will wait on the outside of his tent, if they will not let me enter. O God ! if he dies before I see him !” and she burst into tears. Half frantic, she was rushing into the open air, when she was detained by the strong arm of Sir Louis de Barre, who met her at the entrance : she started as she saw him, and throwing herself at his feet, “ Save him ! save him !” she cried ; “ you can save him, you are all-powerful.”

Who at that moment, however wretched might be his lot, would have exchanged his lowly fortune for the wealth and prosperity of De Barre, with the tortures that now racked his soul ? But he had gone too far to recede : the die was cast ; the poison by this time was doing its work ; and, with a look of anguish which she attributed to a far

different source, he raised her and led her to a seat. "Calm yourself, fairest lady," he said, in a feeling but most respectful tone; "your lord sleeps now, a most favourable sign; when he wakes, you shall see him. Had you known his state, and visited him ere this, your presence might have agitated him, and retarded the cure; nay, in his weak state from loss of blood, it might have rendered his recovery impossible."

"What said the leech?" asked Jane, bending her tearful eyes on her treacherous comforter.

"He looked grave, but told us of a remedy which would finally relieve all wounds."

"And did he apply it?"

"He did, honoured lady, I saw him myself."

"I can command myself now; I can indeed," said she: "Oh! lead me to his couch."

De Barre, who wished to gratify her in every possible way, consented, only stipulating that she should not enter suddenly, and before Charles

was advised of her intention. She readily gave the promise, and attended by him and one lady, with a fluttering heart and unsteady step reached the tent of the royal sufferer. As she approached, the intense stillness which surrounded it, filled her mind with such horrible forebodings that she could scarcely proceed, and was forced to lean on Sir Louis for support. Charles had just awakened, and De Barre began to think Raoul Seil had been faithless to his promises, for he seemed to be rather relieved by the medicine than to suffer from it. The page was going to offer him the draught which the leech had ordered, when Jane interposed, and taking it from him, with her own hand presented it to her lord. All intreaties failed to induce her to leave the tent ; Charles could not sleep again, and in the excitement caused by the fever, liked her to talk to him, and desired the company of Courtenaye, of his

cousin the Duke of Normandy, in short of any one who would cause him to forget himself. Towards evening he became more irritable, the pain from his wound much increased, and all the cavaliers, excepting Courtenaye and De Barre, retired, and left him to their care, and what they called his own ill-humour.

When night, however, had cast her broad mantle over the camp, and all was silent, save the tread of the sentinels and the occasional bark of a watch-dog, De Barre, disguised as a Genoese cross-bowman, bent his way again to Raoul Seil. His reflections were not of the most pleasing kind; the agony of Jane as she clung to him for assistance, her tears, the words " You can save him !" haunted him and rang in his ears. He tried to rouse himself from feelings which he pretended were weak and unmanly, but he could not quite stifle the whispers of conscience and the pangs of remorse; though the sin of retarding or pre-

venting Charles's cure was, he declared, Iola's, not his; she was the origin of whatever crimes he might commit; if she had but listened to his prayer—if she had but given him one look as gentle and confiding as Jane had done that day, all this might have been spared, Charles might now be revelling in his tent, and Jane a happy and contented wife.

These and similar thoughts occupied him until he reached the abode he had visited in the morning. He entered so quietly that Raoul Seil, who was sleeping on a low pallet, was not aroused. The knight paused ere he awaked him. "Miserable wretch!" he murmured; "even yet more unhappy than myself!" The low sound reached the ear of the leech, and starting at seeing a stranger so near him, he trembled violently, and could scarcely articulate the question, "Who art thou?"

De Barre, forgetting his disguise, answered,

"Dost not recollect me? or have thine own drugs stupified thy brain?"

"Pardon, my liege, I knew you not so readily as I should in this costume; what are your commands?"

"My commands are, that thou answerest me faithfully as thou valuest thy life," and he fixed his dark eagle eye upon him, "whether the salve thou usedst this morning was such as I had commanded?"

"On my honour!" returned the leech, laying his hand upon his heart.

"On thy honour! who cares for thy honour? Swear!" he said, "swear by this holy relic; it is a piece of the true cross." He drew a small bit of wood from his vest.

"I swear," said Raoul, but in a voice scarcely audible.

"Louder; that oath could hardly be heard in heaven; unless——"

"Oh, blaspheme not!" cried the wretched man.

"Who talks to me of blasphemy? leave that to monks and cowards;—swear, I say again."

He swore, but started at his own voice, it sounded so unearthly.

After a moment's pause, "How long thinkest thou, friend Raoul, it will be ere the ointment does its duty?"

"Two, three, or four days, according to the strength and constitution of the patient."

"Humph! farewell, Raoul, be silent and faithful, and thou shalt meet with a suitable reward."

Early the next morning the leech was at the bedside of Charles, who was decidedly rather worse than when he left him the preceding day, though he assured the anxiously inquiring Jane the symptoms were more favourable. Courtenaye was not so deceived, and as gently as possible told

her he feared her lord's wound was more serious than they had at first apprehended. He could not gratify his inclinations by remaining with him, as in consequence of his master's indisposition much depended upon his presence in the trenches.

De Barre watched until he was out of sight of the tent, and then hastened to it. His first inquiries were after Charles, and upon hearing of his state, he asked how the Lady Jane supported her griefs.

"They weigh heavily on her," said the page to whom he applied; "but she is forced to bear them."

"Perhaps the presence of a friend might administer some consolation to her wounded spirit; would her highness admit me, thinkest thou?"

The page said he would inquire, and soon returned with a summons to Sir Louis to follow him. He found Jane sitting in a luxuriously furnished and half-darkened apartment, her elbow

leaning on a table, and her head resting on her hand; she neither spoke nor looked up on the knight's approach, but her sobs were loud and frequent. Her women had tried to console her, but, finding it a vain attempt, had retired to a distance. He advanced towards her couch, and addressed her in the gentlest voice,—“Your tears, lady, confirm the sad tidings I have this moment heard.”

She turned quickly upon him: “He is not worse, Sir Louis?”

“Not that I know of, madam, though I hear the leech's report is not so favourable as we might have hoped; but weep not, he may yet recover.”

“Oh! De Barre, you know not—you bold knights can never know what a woman suffers.”

As her soft blue eye met his while she spoke, he felt it would not be his ambition only that would be gratified in calling her his own; if he could but implant in her breast such a love for him as

she now felt for her husband, he could then bear to part even with Iola. And why should she not ? Charles must soon die ; he could not survive beyond a few days ; — De Barre had the advantage of a more comely person and more pleasing manners than the Lord of Blois. As this passed rapidly through his mind he murmured, “ And such a woman ! ”

“ If he dies, Sir Louis, what will become of me, poor forsaken one ? Philip will care no longer for my cause ; neglected, abandoned, I may linger out my existence until death, sweet death, shall call me to everlasting rest.”

“ Say not so, fairest, noblest lady ; who among the princes would not be proud to become your champion, your protector ? Would to God my rank and wealth were such that I might aspire to the honour of placing you on the throne of your ancestors ; but, humble though I be, there is not one among your followers who is, who would be

more devoted." He took her passive hand and pressed it to his lips.

"Thou art a kind and faithful knight, De Barre ; you would have saved him if you could."

A shudder passed over his handsome features, and it was a moment before he recovered himself, but she did not observe it. "Methinks I shall not be utterly friendless while such as you and Sir Reginald de Courtenaye are my guardians."

"Courtenaye is a brave and loyal knight, though somewhat rough at times," observed De Barre ; "he knows not what affliction is, and shines most in the battle-field or at the feast ; but I, alas !" — He sighed.

"You have known sorrow, sir knight, or you could not offer consolation in so gentle a strain."

"Indeed I have ; but could I soften the griefs — could I alleviate the sufferings of the fairest, sweetest princess in France, how gratefully should

I be repaid for all I have endured." And again he took her hand. Fearing, however, to betray himself, and that she might see through his flattery and ardent expressions, for though a woman and a princess, Jane was not blind to adulation, he said more calmly, "Is there aught I can serve you in at this present, lady?"

"Alas! you can do nothing, generous knight, but accept the thanks for all you would do, of the wretched but grateful Jane de Penthievre."

* * * *

The dangerous state of Charles's health appearing more alarming than a simple lance-thrust would have warranted, roused Courtenaye's suspicions, not of the honesty, but of the skill of the leech, who so assiduously attended him, and he determined to seek other advice, though where to meet with it he knew not. Many pretenders to the art could be found, many who could apply a cautery or administer a draught, but few who

could restore the dying to health. Thoughtful and uneasy he wandered through the camp, endeavouring to recall any wonderful cures that might have been performed, but in vain ; when his meditations were interrupted by a man in the dress of a Franciscan ; his hat, and the skirts of his gown adorned with escalop shells, proclaimed him a palmer from the Holy Land.

“ Good morrow, fair sir,” said the friar ; “ you seem more sad and sorrowful this morn than when last we met.”

The knight looked at him with surprise. “ Methinks, reverend father, I have seen you before ; but my memory holds not to say when or where.”

The palmer put off his hat ; “ Knowest thou me now, my son ? or hast thou quite forgotten Blasset and mine host of the Saracen ?”

“ God be praised !” cried Courtenaye. “ By what fortunate chance are you led hither, father ?

You are skilled in leechcraft, you can heal our dying prince."

"Lead me to him, sir knight; if my knowledge can avail him, the will shall not be wanting; but I work no miracles, I am no other than you see me; though in Palestine I learned to treat wounds and sicknesses differently, and sometimes with more success than the Franks. The infidel can save the body when the Christian fails; but, alas! what boots it when his soul must be accursed?"

"Wilt thou then, father, bear me company to the tent of the Lord Charles of Blois, who was desperately wounded yesternorn? He has been attended by a leech, but grows rather worse than better, and I fear cannot hold life long."

The friar readily consented, and questioning him as he went, more particularly on the prince's health, they soon arrived at the house of mourning. Charles was almost mad with pain and fever,

and Jane, pale and exhausted, was bending over him, in vain endeavouring to relieve his agonies. She turned as they entered, but did not observe the friar, who was rather behind the knight.

"Oh ! Courtenaye," she whispered, " the fever increases ; he cannot, cannot live."

" I bring hope and consolation," he replied ; "for Providence threw me in the way of this holy man, and he has much skill in pharmacy."

He looked round for the friar ; but he was much struck and almost shocked by his appearance : his eyes were fixed on Courtenaye, who had doffed his casque and tossed aside the locks from his brow, yet the palmer gazed on him as if on vacancy ; his nostrils were distended, and his lips compressed in the same extraordinary way as when Courtenaye first observed him shriving the poor woman at the inn.

" Father," he said—the Franciscan started as if suddenly awakened from a dream, and drew his

hand over his eyes as though he must collect his ideas, ere he could be aware in whose presence he stood — “Father, behold your patient.”

The friar suddenly recovered himself, advanced to the couch, and having stripped off the plaisters and bandages, proceeded to ascertain the extent of the injury. We do not excel in chirurgical descriptions, nor are they interesting to the generality of readers : suffice it therefore to say, the palmer informed Courtenaye that an improper unguent had been used, and that if Charles had enemies he should be disposed to suspect treason : however, he had in the East acquired the knowledge of several antidotes to poisons, and he trusted he should yet be in time to save his life. Having dressed his side, he gave him a medicine to allay his fever and burning thirst, and said he should watch by him. Jane timidly asked if she might remain ? With a look of kindness he replied, if she could control her feelings sufficiently

neither to speak nor move, he would not wish to banish her. Observing Courtenaye about to leave the tent, in an agitated voice he said :—

“ Sir knight, you will return ere long.”

Following him with his eyes until the heavy folds of the drapery concealed him from his sight, and even after he was gone, gazing on the spot where he had disappeared from his view, the palmer groaned inwardly, and turned towards his patient.

As evening approached, the fever abated ; the friar never quitted his post, and by dint of constant perseverance, and almost more than human skill, in a few days the Lord Charles was pronounced by his indefatigable attendant out of danger. Jane, who had been sunk in the lowest abyss of misery, was now so elated that her women found some difficulty in restoring her mind to its usual tranquil state ? But who shall describe the feelings of De Barre ? Not only disappointed

by the gradual recovery of Charles, but that recovery owing in great measure to the efforts of the man he most hated ! He dreaded likewise that suspicion should rest on him, and hearing from Courtenaye that the ointment smelt of treason —

“ The wretch ! ” exclaimed De Barre, “ surely that base leech cannot have been bribed by any one ? Now I recollect, I met him prowling about in a mysterious manner, when I so hastily sought a mediciner the day our noble master was wounded. I would recommend, fair sir, that you despatch a trusty messenger, and command him hither, that we may examine him.”

Eustace St. Valery undertook the commission, but returned alone in about an hour, with a countenance and air expressive of feelings so unlike his usual careless gaiety, that Courtenaye’s wonder was excited, and yet so eager was Eustace to relate his adventures, that before his master had recovered from his astonishment, his tale was told

"He had found the leech," he said, "sitting at a table, leaning his head on his hand; an empty cup was by him, and an open box before him, in which there was a silver crown: he thought he was looking into the box, and called him; the leech made no answer, so he went nearer and pulled his arm, imagining he must be asleep, —and oh, Sir Reginald," continued the boy shuddering, "he was cold, quite cold, and already stiff with death."

"By the rood!" cried De Barre, "this man must be a traitor. We have spies in the camp. I make no doubt he has been bribed by the governor of Rennes, or some one of the Earl of Montfort's party: burn his body, and let it be treated with all manner of indignity."

"No, no," said Courtenaye, "his vile arts have not succeeded; Charles is recovering: let us not torture his unconscious clay, and may God have mercy on his soul!"

De Barre, however, did not appear to be so easily satisfied ; he obtained possession of the corpse, which he caused to be publicly consumed, and made many inquiries respecting the manner of the leech's death ; but as no one could answer them, the interest excited by this mysterious circumstance gradually died away, and Raoul Seil was forgotten.

The palmer hovered about the camp, even after the prince no longer required his assistance, and the fame of his skill spreading far and wide, his talents were constantly in requisition. He spoke little, but sighed often ; yet, if his sadness were observed, he would turn it off by some casual inquiry or remark.

" I can't think what ails that friar," observed St. Valery to his master one day, while he was closing up the plates of his armour ; " he does more good than any one I know, and yet is always

dolorous. He has specifics for every one but himself."

"I fear," returned Courtenaye, "his youth was not so guiltless as thine, Eustace; so take my advice, and give thyself no cause for repentance in thine old age. Gently, be not so severe upon my shoulder, or that will rise up in judgement against thee."

"Pardon, fair sir, I buckled your baldrick in haste, for I thought I heard Lord Charles's horn."

"Not Lord Charles's, Eustace; 'tis Lord Louis of Spain who leads the troops to-day. Quick, boy; I hear René with the chargers, and I would not lag behind when 'forward' is the word."

CHAPTER IX.

All hearts in love use their own tongues —
Let every eye negotiate for itself,
And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch
Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.

Much Ado about Nothing.

It was some time before Charles had sufficiently regained his strength to head his men-at-arms against the enemy; but his interests were not neglected. His cousin, the Duke of Normandy, was a true son of Philip de Valois, and he did not disgrace his lineage.

The Rennois were harassed at all points; the spirits of the besieged at length began to flag, and the burghers sent a deputation to the governor, entreating him to surrender.

“Never!” answered Sir Godfrey. “Are your memories so short that you forget the promises you made our noble lady? We may yet be succoured; and even if we have no aid for five or six days, our provisions will well hold out until then.”

The citizens retired, silenced, but not convinced; they agreed, however, to wait a few days longer, when they again appealed to him. But the governor of Rennes was not easily to be diverted from his purpose. He was of an unflinching temperament, and would rather have run the risk of starvation to himself and his garrison, than yield the city which he had promised to defend. The people now became outrageous; they no longer obeyed the call to arms, and forcibly entering the castle, as Sir Godfrey was sitting down to his evening meal, told him he was their prisoner: that they cared not if he capitulated or not; he had no power now, and they should make their own terms. It was in vain to

expostulate; they hurried him to the keep, and placing a strong guard over him, sent a herald to the Lord Charles, offering to surrender themselves to him on the morrow, on condition that all those who were of the Montfort party might retire in safety wherever they thought proper. Charles complied with these terms, and "thus was the city of Rennes surrendered, in the month of May 1342."*

Sir Godfrey de Reyneval, hearing that he was at liberty to depart, resolved to repair to Hennebon as soon as possible; and was preparing to leave the chamber of his prison-house, when he heard footsteps on the stairs, and presently was courteously saluted by an unexpected and unknown visiter. It had occurred to Courtenaye, that the countess having been some time an inhabitant of Rennes, it was possible the governor might have some acquaintance with her ladies,

* Froissart.

and he might learn from him something of the dark-haired damsel who had done so much mischief in his heart. The dignified old governor, supposing him come to take possession of the castle, returned his salute; but in a manner which expressed, as plainly as manner could do, that he desired no farther acquaintance with him. Courtenaye was not to be so soon abashed; love makes men bold, and laying his hand on Sir Godfrey's arm he said:

"So please you, sir governor, if you be not straitened for time, I would fain have a few minutes' parley with you."

"If you expect, sir knight, to obtain any information that would facilitate your rebellious enterprise, I tell you plainly, you know not to whom you have applied: had the people remained faithful to their professions, you and I might now be standing here under very different circumstances. As it is, I shall avail myself of

your lord's permission, and instantly join my noble mistress."

Courtenaye could scarcely forbear smiling at the dogged aurliness of the veteran warrior; but as he wished to be on friendly terms with him, he maintained his gravity. "I assure you, Sir Godfrey de Reyneval, that the knight who now addresses you, would be the last to pry into your secrets: I came on a far different business."

Sir Reginald found no difficulty in declaring what was not his purpose, but when he came to explain what was, he sought in vain for words to express his meaning; he stopped.

"Well, fair sir—" said the governor.

It was very strange that he should mind speaking to an old man about a beautiful young girl, —when he had sought him out too for that very purpose. After a moment's hesitation he said, "Sir Godfrey de Reyneval, there is a lady in the suite of the Countess of Montfort, beautiful

on the opening-day; I have seen and spoken with her, but to this hour I know not her name; you can inform me if——”

The governor, with whom Blanche was the greater favourite of the two, from her vivacity and playfulness, instantly concluded she must be the demoiselle of the knight's choice; he interrupted him and shook his head——“I fear you have no chance with her, fair sir; her bright eyes look too kindly on another brave knight in her mistress's band.”

“But are you sure it is the one I mean? she is dark-eyed and heavenly-looking.”

“Nay, then, you must speak of Iola — Iola Vaudemont; she is tall, hath rich brown hair——”

“The same,” cried Gourtouys, “Will you, sir governor, — you say you are bound for Hennebion, — will you be the bearer of a token from me that the lady Iola's good counsel was not neglected?”

“Heyday! times are altered since I was

young ; fair ladies used then to be the idols, but not the counsellors of gay cavaliers ; the world is fast degenerating when men are obliged to apply to women for advice."

" You are somewhat harsh, methinks, Sir Godfrey ; but even yourself, if report speaks truth, listen to the voice of the Countess of Montfort."

" The Countess of Montfort !—But where will you find another woman like Jane of Flanders ? Oh ! sir knight, there breathes not her peer in Christendom."

Courtenaye, observing the praises of his mistress seemed a favourite theme with the old governor, and that if he once was fairly embarked in the ocean of her virtues, he should never persuade him to return to the object which was nearest his heart, ventured to interpose, by requesting him, if really going to Hennebon, to present the Lady Iola with a tame falcon, which, hooded and belled, he now put into his hand.

"It is a handsome bird," returned the governor; "I once loved the sport myself. But who, fair sir, shall I say is the donor?"

"Say nothing; the Lady Iola will know as much of me from this as at present I care to tell; one day perhaps—But you are anxious to leave this city, good sir knight, to tell your gracious lady—for even I will allow she is gracious—how bravely you defended it; I will relieve you of my company. God speed you on your journey!"

"And give me a favourable reception at the end of it from more ladies than one, hey!—sir knight?"

Courtenaye smiled; they descended from the tower together; Courtenaye to return to the camp, and preserve the citizens from the outrages and plunder of the soldiery, Sir Godfrey with a heavy heart to Hennebon.

The countess had been apprised of the surren-

der of Rennes; Sir Godfrey was therefore spared the mortification of being the first to proclaim his own defeat; but though he found she was informed of the worst, he doubted what reception he should meet with from his ambitious mistress. Contrary, however, to his expectations, she met him with a benign aspect, and before he could speak, she said, "My brave and faithful Reyneval, I am your debtor, for having so long forborne to listen to the mutinous clamours of the mean burgesses of Rennes; your fortune has been a hard one; but we must look for better times."

"Spoken like yourself, noble lady; right glad am I to find this sad misfortune affects you not so seriously as I had apprehended, but most I thank you for your reliance on my fidelity and earnest endeavours to withstand the power of Charles. The people made better terms than perhaps they could have done a few days hence; we must then have yielded at discretion, for no

succours appeared, and our granaries were nearly exhausted. Has your grace heard sight of your embassy to England?"

"Nothing, Sir Godfrey; I know not even if Olsson and my boy are safe arrived, or what assistance Edward will vouchsafe to send us. I suppose Charles will next turn his arms hither; may God we may hear from London ere then; for though at present we could sustain a siege, yet, judging by the Rennois, however bold they are at the beginning, the courage of the burghers flags, if not supported after a time by the sight of new faces."

"Hennebon has one advantage over Rennes; it is blest by the sunshine of your grace's countenance,—that is worth at least a hundred men and a week's provisions."

The countess smiled: "You must have need of rest and refreshment, sir governor, after your toils; there is already a tower of the castle

assigned you, for I must have the benefit of your grey hairs to assist me in my councils."

" You do me honour beyond my deserts, dear lady ; but, before I accept your gracious permission, may I crave an interview with the Lady Iola ?"

" Certainly, sir knight : you will find her wandering near a ruined abbey, just without the walls of the town ; you know she hates confinement, and it is not half an hour since she told me she should seek her favourite haunt. She is grown more pensive of late, and loves to muse, she says, on the glorious days that are past, when Richard the lion-hearted ruled in England, and Philip Augustus swayed the sceptre of France."

The good old knight, following the directions that were given him, and guided by the abbey tower, had no difficulty in meeting with the lady he sought : but instead of silence, or at most half suppressed sighs, which he expected to hear, not

doubting the maiden was as love-sick as her cavalier would wish, the sounds of laughter and female voices met his ear.

It was a beautiful afternoon ; the turf, as yet unscorched by the summer sun, was spread like a velvet carpet all around ; the chestnut blossoms perfumed the air ; and the oaks, ancient lords of the soil, clothed with the rich foliage of May, relieved the weary traveller from the brightness of the clear blue sky. Under the spreading branches of one of these monarchs of the forest, the Lady Iola reclined ; a half-opened volume was in her hand, but she seemed not much interested in its contents, for ever and anon her eyes wandered from the page to watch the progress of a crystal stream, that with tiny eddies and mimic waterfalls hurried on its course to join the waters of the Blavet. Blanche had been chasing a butterfly, and, warm with exercise, had seated herself at her feet ; she shook back her bright locks, which, fall-

ing on her neck and shoulders, looked in the sunlight like threads of burnished gold.

"Come," cried the little fairy, playfully snatching the book and throwing it aside, "I wish you would leave poring over these black-looking tomes; Iola; you spoil your eyes, and will look as pale and ugly as old Lady de Spinefort, when the brave cavaliers from England arrive. Heigho! I wonder we hear nothing of them."

"Have patience, Blanche, we shall welcome them in time—for your sake I hope it may be soon;" she sighed.

"And for your's too, fair lady sentiment; your thoughts seem very dull company, so I shall sing you a merry lay of Provence." Without waiting for a reply, she took up a lute that lay on the grass beside her, and, without prelude, struck immediately into one of the most lively airs of that lively people. Sir Godfrey came up at that instant, but as his approach was unobserved, being concealed

from Lola by the trunk of the tree, and Blanche too intent upon her instrument to notice him, he passed, determined at least to hear the end of her strain. She had scarcely finished it when, catching a glimpse of the intruder, her lute still in her hand, she suddenly jumped up, and running towards him, exclaimed; "My dear, good Sir Godfrey, how came you here? I thought you were at Rennes."

Lola, perceiving to whom Blanche spoke, rose and advanced towards him. "I am afraid I interrupt you," he said, "you will not consider me welcome."

"Always, Sir Godfrey, when you do not look so grave," returned Blanche. "I declare," continued the thoughtless girl, "I do believe the French have taken Rennes."

The governor shook his head and turned away. "I came," said he, "in search of the Lady Lola; I have a commission to execute." He took the falcon

from his wrist and presented it to her. "I was to deliver this to you; the knight who gave it me bade me say nothing more than that he wished you to understand that your advice and counsels were well received."

Iola's crimsoned cheeks confessed she was not ignorant from whom the present came; she took the bird, and stroking its feathers, thanked Sir Godfrey for the trouble he had taken in conveying it.

Blanche darted forward. "Have you discovered who he is?" cried she.

"No, indeed," he answered, smiling at her eagerness; "I can only tell you he is a handsome cavalier of Lord Charles's party."

"Lord Charles's party!" echoed the two maidens, but in different tones; Iola's was that of disappointment, Blanche only expressed surprise.

"Yes, Lord Charles's party; did not you know that?"

"No, indeed," returned Iola, putting the bird from her; "I do not care for it," she added, "it is not so very pretty."

"Oh, Iola! for shame, I shall take it then. Are you sure, Sir Godfrey, it was not intended for me?"

"Quite sure; I do not doubt but that it will be well tended, so I may leave it in safe hands."

Observing he was going, Iola called after him;

"Sir Godfrey, — but are you certain the — the knight of the falcon is on Lord Charles's side? Are you acquainted with him? Does he bear himself bravely? But why do I seek to know? his exploits are nothing to me."

"Shall I answer you truly, lady? Well, then, I do not remember to have seen him until the melancholy day when Rennes surrendered; he met me just as I was leaving the castle, and begged I would deliver this bird to you. Farewell! my pretty maidens."

They did not again attempt to detain him. Iola, forgetting she still held the string, unconsciously pulled it; the bird hopped into her lap; she smoothed its feathers again, but did not speak. Blanche for once was silenced; she knew not until now that the stranger knight had really made so deep an impression on her friend, and she felt for her because she saw that it was mutual. She started up, threw her arms round Iola's neck, and kissing her, said, "Don't be so sad; he knows you are here, and will follow his bird ere long, to be assured his flight has been true."

"And what then, Blanche? he can never be anything to me—he who has drawn the sword against *her* can never be my friend."

Blanche nodded her head. "Make no rash resolves, there may be many good knights and true among the French."

"Oh, Blanche! a rebel, or at best an abettor of rebels!" and she turned her glorious dark eyes

full on her as she spoke ; " Never, never ! I blush to think I took an interest in the fate of one, who ranks himself among the foes of Montfort, my mistress, my protector, my more than mother. I will muse on him no longer. Come, child, the countess will be expecting us."

" Poor innocent bird," said Blanche, " thou must be cared for in spite of thy master's sins." She attempted to take him, but, as Iola rose, he stationed himself on her shoulder, and by no arts could she entice him to leave it.

They followed the windings of the stream, stepping a few moments to watch the setting sun as he blazed through a window of the ruined abbey and then sunk behind the hill, until they reached the gate of Hennebion. The countess was rather grave, and Blanche had exhausted all her wit, and half her stock of songs, ere she could obtain a real, genuine smile from the still more melancholy Iola.

CHAPTER X.

That pale, that whitefaced shore,
Whose foot spurns back the ocean's roaring tides,
And coops from other lands her islanders.
—England hedged in with the main,
That water-walled bulwark, still secure,
And confident from foreign purposes.

King John.

IN order to preserve the thread of our narrative, we have rather anticipated the order of events, and must now return to Sir Amauri de Clisson and his young charge, whom we left pursuing their voyage with a "favouring gale" to merry England. They arrived safely in the Thames without any impediments to their progress; and as soon as King Edward was informed of their approach, he despatched a messenger, desiring they might be

lodged in East Cheap, with all the attention and magnificence due from him to the son of his ally the Earl of Montfort.

Our travellers had chosen a fortunate period for their visit, as the city of London at that time presented one scene of festivity; the King of England being engaged in celebrating the release from prison of the gallant William Earl of Salisbury. Sir Amauri met with a gracious reception from the monarch, and was invited to be present on the following day at some grand shows and jousts, to be held in Smithfield. The beautiful and virtuous Countess of Salisbury graced them with her presence, by her husband's command. She knew the feast was held really more on her account than his; for Edward had become violently enamoured of her, when she received him at Wark Castle, after his return from his Scottish expedition. She dared not disobey her lord, nor did she choose to attract the king's eye

more than she could help; she therefore made her appearance, dressed in the simplest robes she could select, and surrounded by a troop of young ladies in the bloom of youth, whom she caused to be magnificently attired. But no disguise, however unbecoming, could conceal the charms of this lovely woman. King Edward frowned as he took his state, the royal Philippa by his side, to witness the entertainments, when he saw the lady of his heart apparently so regardless of his admiration. The cloud, however, soon passed over, and, pleased on the whole with the amusements of the day, he was particularly accessible to Sir Amauri's suit. He directed the demands of the Countess of Montfort to be immediately taken into consideration, and also the treaty of marriage between Lord Julian and the Princess Mary.

The result was, that Sir Walter Manny, one of the best and bravest knights of Hainault, who

had accompanied Philippa to England on her marriage, was ordered to assemble a body of men-at-arms, and six thousand archers, to attend the commands of the Breton knight. While this army was in preparation, the king, desirous to make an impression on Sir Amauri de Clisson of English wealth and grandeur, continued the feasts and entertainments, at all of which the youthful Prince of Brittany was present.

Edward, courteous and affable, beloved by his subjects even when he most oppressed them, was especially gracious to strangers.

"Methinks, Sir Amauri," he one day said to him, "I should make no objection to see my young daughter sometime Duchess of Brittany. I will allow that that fair boy is worthy of aspiring to win and wear the golden broom.* He is, I suppose, to remain with us; it will be somewhat of a long courtship, for his affianced bride is yet

* The crest of the Plantagenets.

scarce two years old. However, he will learn to be a true knight, if he take my Edward for his model; though he has as yet seen but twelve summers, I much mistake if he will not one day set Europe in a blaze."

"My noble mistress," returned Clisson, "felt that in confiding the heir of Brittany to your grace's care, she should not only better provide for his safety than she could do in our own land, torn by civil dissensions, but that, in so gallant a court as this of England, he could not fail of becoming a brave knight, and an honour to chivalry."

"Nothing shall be wanting on our parts, I promise you; sometimes the soil is naturally so barren, that the most careful culture avails not; but that will not be the case here, the boy has too much of his mother in his eye. In three days you leave us, Sir Amauri; until then I suppose you will not resign your charge."

Sir Amauri requested he might retain him

until his departure, promising to deliver him and his attendants into the hands of some one of Philippa's household, who might be appointed to receive them, the night before he sailed.

The next day was the last of the entertainments. His guardian thought the Lord Julian had seen enough of shows and feasts, and desired he should remain at home ; but the child having drunk so deeply of the cup of pleasure, was the more anxious for this indulgence. " It would be the last, the very last petition he should make," he said ; and Sir Amauri, unaccustomed to thwart him, at length consented. They were rather late in arriving at Smithfield, and were obliged to take seats in a more crowded and less conspicuous part than usual. The child shouted for joy at any successful feats of valour, and appeared so thoroughly to enter into the chivalrous pastime, that the knight was glad his first intentions had been overruled. After some time Julian became

more silent ; Clisson looked round for him, and seeing him close at his elbow intently watching a game at quarter-staff, he continued his conversation with some knights who were beside him, until the assembly broke up. The child put his hand in his, and with some difficulty they made their way through the crowd.

“ Well, my little cavalier, and how have you enjoyed this day’s sport ?” he said as soon as they got into more open space. The child looked down but made no answer. “ How’s this ?” he continued ; “ are you sick or sorrowful, most noble prince ?” He pushed the boy’s cap more off his eyes, and the cause of his silence was presently explained. There was indeed the fair hair and bright complexion of the heir of Brittany, the same cap and feather, and green velvet frock ; but it was not Julian. The knight uttered an exclamation of horror.

"Who are you?" he cried. "For God's sake! tell me where is the Lord of Montfort?"

"I do not know who he is," answered his little companion. "I can only tell you a very tall woman fetched away a little boy dressed just like me, while you were attending to that dispute in the gallery about a seat. Alice brought me, and told me to sit in his place, and not speak a word; she said she should find it out if I did, and——"

"Alice! who is Alice?"

"An old woman who comes to see us, and gives me cakes sometimes, and to-day brought me this beautiful dress, and said she would take me to see the show."

"Do you know who the tall woman is? Did she come with you?"

"I never saw her before to-day; she joined us as we came along. She seemed to know Alice

quite well ; for they whispered together, and had a great secret."

" And did not Lord Julian scream out ?"

" Oh no ! for she stuffed a great piece of sweetmeat in his mouth, and then held his hands so that he could not take it out."

" Who are you, and where do you live ?" asked the knight, thinking he might obtain some clue to the discovery of his young charge.

" They call me Roger, and I live in Carnby Court."

" And where is Carnby Court ?"

" I don't know ; but I think, if you will take me to the bridge, I can show you the way."

The knight, in a state bordering on distraction, seized the child in his arms ; but recollecting he himself needed a guide, requested a saddler, whose shop he was passing, to put him in the road. The man, flattered at being thus civilly accosted

by so fine a gentleman, laid down his work, and offered to accompany him.

“ You are from Smithfield, fair sir, I take it. There have been glorious doings there. Oh ! we never had a king like this one ; in my young days it was quite another-guess sort of a thing, when his poor fool of a father pretended to rule us, but let those two Spensers rule him. The queen too, she is a fine woman, don’t you think so, sir ?”

“ Yes, yes ; but I am in haste, good man.”

“ Oh ! I understand you : you are for a boat to go to Westminster this afternoon. Your honour’s right in wishing to make speed, for you’ll hardly save the flood-tide.”

In too much agony of mind to contradict him, Sir Amauri allowed him to continue his conjectures, and build upon this foundation a description of the village of Charing, and the beautiful golden cross King Edward the First had placed there in memory of Queen Eleanor.

“ It was before my time,” he went on, “ but I have heard my father say, there never was a sadder sight than when her funeral procession halted there. She died in the north, you know, sir, and the king took it so to heart he had her brought all the way up to be buried at Westminster, in the Abbey; and had a cross erected wherever they stopped. Ah! she was a good woman enough in herself, but she gave us a very bad king in her son. Now this queen, Philippa, is altogether different, and the Prince of Wales is a most uncommonly sweet youth; don’t you think so, sir?”

“ Oh yes! I quite agree. But are we not near the bridge?”

“ Right upon it, your honour. Your honour will find these stairs the best. Shall I call a boat?”

Sir Amauri declined, and desirous of getting

rid of his loquacious attendant, put a crown into his hand, and wished him good morning.

The man, astonished that any one should want to go to the bridge and not want a boat, looked again at the knight, and then at the money, which was at least three times as much as he had expected. He loitered a little to watch him.

Master Roger, who seemed now perfectly to understand where he was, led the knight down Thames-street about twenty yards, and then took a turning to the left.

“Is this Carnby Court?” asked Sir Amauri.

“No; Carnby Court is very narrow; we shall soon come to it though.”

The knight thought this sufficiently confined to exclude any fresh air; but following the track of his juvenile guide, who made another turn to the left, and then one to the right, he found himself at length in Carnby Court. It was indeed

narrow, and the dirt and wretchedness of its inhabitants formed a striking contrast with the gay attire of himself and his young companion. They were saluted, as they passed along, with coarse jokes ; but no one appeared to recognise the little Roger, so completely was he metamorphosed. He led the way to a house of much the same description as those they had passed ; the door was on the latch, and as the knight was going to open it, a shrill female voice from the window of an opposite dwelling accosted him with :

“ Ye ’ll no’ find anybody at home ; they were all clean off this morning, some two hours back.”

“ And where are they gone to, good woman ?”

“ Good woman ! Ha ! ha !” said she, bursting into a loud laugh : “ I’m the only one in the place then. I don’t know where they are gone ;

how should I? To the devil, for anything I care; and the best place for them too."

The child pulled Sir Amauri's sleeve. "Don't mind her, it is only old Meg. I dare say mother is at home, though she pretends she is not, because she does not like so fine a gentleman should go and see mother and not her."

The knight went in, and found for once at least Mistress Margaret's information correct. There was no one to be seen; the child ran up the broken stairs, calling Mother, Susan, Gilbert, Alice; but no answer was returned. Everything bore the appearance of extreme poverty, not to say wretchedness, and signs of the hasty departure of its late inmates. Fragments of broken victuals were strewed on the floor; the embers, though extinguished, were scarcely cold on the hearth. Roger's astonishment at length gave way to grief, and taking up a dismantled

toy, he sat down on the ground and burst into a flood of tears.

"Who is your mother? Where is she? What is your father?" asked the knight in a breath.

"I have no father," returned the child. "My mother's name is Dame Boymans; she buys old clothes and sells them again."

"Have you any brothers and sisters?"

"I have one sister, who lives at home with us, and one brother, who is a waterman; but I can't think where they are all gone."

The knight in the greatest perplexity stood gazing on the innocent cause of all this misery, and wondered at so handsome a child being found in such a den of filth. The boy wiped his eyes and betrayed the secret; the beautiful pink and white vanished from his cheeks, and Clisson instantly perceived that to art alone was he indebted for his resemblance to the Lord Julian.

His hair was natural certainly, and he was clean ; but his eye had lost its brilliancy, and his countenance was as yellow and squalid as that of any other inhabitant of Carnby Court. What to do he knew not, and he was going to leave the place in despair, when he saw a piece of crumpled paper on the floor ; hoping, he scarcely knew why, this might give him some information, he picked it up. Alas ! it was only a wretched daub of St. Thomas of Canterbury. Then he thought he saw something glisten in the corner of the hearth : this was indeed a valuable relic ; it was a small ebony crucifix, with the figure of Christ in chased silver.

“ Whom does this belong to ? ” he inquired of the boy.

“ Why, that is old Alice’s, I declare,” cried the child. “ How very odd she should have left it. I remember she showed it to me this morning, when she put these clothes on, and painted

my face. I did not like to have that stuff rubbed on my cheeks, but she said I should look like a lord."

The knight carefully wrapped the crucifix in the portrait of St. Thomas, in hopes it might throw some light on the affair. That these people were only the mean agents of some wretch, or wretches, who had resolved upon kidnapping Julian, was very evident; but who were the authors of the plot, their motive, and where they could have conveyed the prince, were mysteries which in vain he endeavoured to unravel. Though the old hag who first addressed him appeared so ignorant of whither the Boymans family had decamped, it was possible some other person in the alley might be better informed; so, taking the child with him, he passed out of the hovel. Making his way through a troop of dirty children, who now recognised the poor little Roger, in spite of his finery, and complimented him with

laughter and handfuls of mud, the knight paused before the door of the only decent-looking person he had seen. It was a woman spinning, and at the same time endeavouring to drown the noise of three squalling children, by out-screaming them. At least three minutes elapsed before the knight could make himself heard, and when he asked if she could give him any information of Dame Boymans, she shook her head.

"Ah! yese got one of them there, I see. There's never been no luck in the place since they came. I'm glad they are gone."

"But can you tell me whither they are gone?"

"Oh! they're gone with old Alice Macauley, the Scotch witch. I never could tell, for my part, what she came here for; she's never done no good; to my certain knowledge, she spirited away a beautiful black cat, and once bewitched my wheel, that it would not turn for a week."

"Well but, dame, that is not telling me where they are now."

"I am sure, sir, I don't know. Nobody knew anything about it till maybe a few hours ago. I saw Gilbert go to his work this morning, just the same as usual, and I spoke to him as he went past, but he never said anything about his mother going away. About noon, I should think, Dame Boymans and Sue came down the court; they had each got a great bundle. 'Where are you going, mother?' said I.—'Just across the water to Southwark, to see my sister.'—'To see your sister! Why, I thought you had quarrelled!'—'Oh!' said she, 'we've made it up now, and Sue and I are going to take her some old things.'—'And what have you done with Roger?'—'Roger!' replied she. 'Roger! Oh! he is gone for a walk with my friend Alice Macauley!'—'Mark my words, Mother Boymans,' said I, 'your boy will never

get any good from that woman ;' And so, sir, you see, it's proved, tricking him out in this manner. Where did you find him, sir ?"

"He was changed for a young gentleman I had with me dressed exactly like him, and it is to find him again I am making these inquiries."

"Lauk, sir, you'll never get him again. I dare say that wicked creature has whipt him off to fairy-land by this time."

"Who is the woman in Southwark ?"

"She is a widow: her name is Jones; but I'll lay a wager she was not going there."

"Nevertheless I must try all chances," said Sir Amauri. So, taking good care this child should not escape him, he followed the maze he had threaded an hour before, and soon found himself again on the bridge. Stepping into a boat, he was rapidly rowed up the river and across to Southwark, where he landed, and made all

inquiries for the widow Jones ; but he could obtain no tidings of such a person. The affair now had become so serious, that he conceived his best plan would be to go immediately to the Tower, where King Edward was residing, and inform him of the frightful story.

Edward was giving a parting feast to Sir Walter Manny, and the lords and knights who were to accompany him to Brittany. Sir Amauri's absence had been more than once noticed, and with some displeasure by the monarch, when, regardless of all form and ceremony, still holding the changeling in his hand, the knight rushed into the hall. He stared wildly around him, and was making his way towards the throne, when Edward perceiving him, exclaimed :

“ What is all this ? What is all this ? This is not my young son-in-law ! ”

Sir Amauri could scarcely find words to tell his heart-rending tale. The gay cavaliers and

laughter-loving dames stopped their mirth, the light foot of the dancer no longer responded to the merry notes of the flageolet; all eagerly pressed forward to hear the almost incredible story, and gaze on the child, who, unused to so much observation, hid his face in Sir Amauri's mantle.

"This must be looked to," said the king.

"You say you can obtain no trace of him, sir knight?"

"None, your grace; he was conveyed away by a different person from the one who brought this child."

"It must be some regularly concerted plot, for I see they have contrived to disguise this urchin, in point of dress at least, exactly like his model."

"Ay, and in complexion too, my lord; for that was as much altered as his limbs."

"Come hither, Sir John St. Paul," said the king, scarcely attending to the latter part of the

knight's speech ; " come hither ; now attend to our instructions ; make all speed to Andrew Fitzmaurice, our mayor of London, and bid him use his utmost endeavours to find the young Lord Julian of Montfort, who was stolen this morning from Smithfield by a tall woman in a sad-coloured cloak."

Sir John St. Paul bowed. " As this child so much resembled him, does not your grace think he had better accompany me, that Fitzmaurice may know whom he is to seek ?" Clisson yielded the child, but upon Sir John's promise to bring him back in the space of an hour, as he was at present the only clue to the other.

Philippa wept. " Surely," she said, " your highness should consider the motive of those villains in kidnapping the boy, as by that means you may the more readily discover where they have conveyed him. It could not have been for

the value of his clothes, as those in which this child is dressed are full as costly. Have you any personal enemy, Sir Amauri de Clisson ?

"None that I know of, madam."

"Has the Countess of Montfort, think you ?"

"Many, I should suppose, in France, but not in England, I hope."

"It is not probable that such a crime should have been perpetrated by an Englishman, but for the value of the child's apparel ; and that, we see, has not been thought of."

"No," replied Clisson, "therefore it must be from some private grudge ; and yet I am unconscious—— I have recognised no French knights since I have been in London with whom I am at enmity—— The countess, I should think——"

"I have it ! I have it !" cried Philippa, interrupting him. "Charles of Blois has taken the Earl of Montfort prisoner, he is now besieging city after city in Brittany, and will endeavour of

course to get the countess into his hands; there would then remain only this child, and if he could obtain him, nothing would prevent his acquiring undisputed possession of the duchy.

"No, no," answered Clisson; "Charles of Blois is a true knight, he would never consent to the employment of treachery."

"Then it must be some one of his party," rejoined Philippa; "that is, if he be stolen for a political purpose. But how came it, sir knight, you were not better guarded, or more watchful of your charge?"

"From this cause, madam, which, simple as it may appear, is nevertheless the true one. I had resolved not to allow my little master to be present at the games to-day, thinking his young imagination would have a surfeit, but I permitted his retinue to go, as these were to be the last. After their departure the child again entreated me not to deprive him of this one pleasure.

Weakly enough, as now I bitterly repent, I suffered his tears to move me, and we went unattended. He enjoyed the show much; I saw him, as I thought, still by my side, but after we moved off, not answering some question I put to him, I pulled back his cap, and—God spare me such another moment of agony!”

“Could the child give no account of himself?”

“With some difficulty I discovered his dwelling in a wretched alley near the river, but the inhabitants had decamped, leaving their miserable hovel in a state of the greatest confusion. I sought for something that might lead me to discover the object of my search, but found nothing, save this portrait of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and this crucifix.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the beautiful Countess of Salisbury, pressing forward, “give it to me;” at the same moment extending the finest arm in England—in the world perhaps—“It is, it is the

same!" and sunk upon a chair. "Yet stay, I will prove it," and touching a spring, the head of the Christ opened, and discovered a thorn, which all present of course believed, as firmly as the countess herself, to be part of the crown which had once wounded the brow of our Saviour. Overcome with emotion, and forgetful, or regardless of spectators, she pressed the sacred relic to her lips, and burst into tears.

Sir Amauri de Clisson and the rest of the company stood in silent wonder.

"Water! water!" cried the king, and seating himself by her side, he took her hand. "My beautiful Salisbury, what is this crucifix? you must explain this sudden perturbation." Lovely at all times, as she turned towards him and put the crucifix in his hand without speaking, her present agitation heightened the glow upon her cheek, and made her look still more interesting. She was clad in a simple robe, without any other ornament

than the jewels in her girdle, and one gem in her hair; no throat but her's could have borne the near approach of the snowy muslin without suffering by the comparison. Her modesty had led her unconsciously to adopt the most becoming costume, for the contrast between her plain attire and the gorgeous dresses of her companions served only to make her appear the more captivating.

Philippa and the rest of the company listened eagerly to her tale. "This crucifix," she said, "once belonged to my mother, she gave it me on her death-bed; from that time it always hung in my chamber at Wark Castle. While my lord was absent in Scotland, a woman calling herself Alice Macauley, came and offered to give me a charm to preserve my lord's life." Here the countess lowered her voice and blushed. "I was foolish enough to believe her, and she remained some time about the place. One morning, she was gone, and my crucifix could nowhere be found,

I therefore concluded she must have stolen it; for after the most diligent search no tidings could I obtain."

"Did she steal nothing else?" asked Edward.

"I believe she did, but nothing that I valued like this, my mother's parting gift."

"I do not see," observed Philippa, "that this story at all assists us in our discoveries; my lady of Salisbury had a relic which was stolen from her by the same person who has now kidnapped Julian of Montfort; but it tells us not where she may be met with."

At this moment, Sir John St. Paul returned with the little stranger; Fitzmaurice, he said, had commenced an active search, had despatched scouts in all directions, and had offered a reward for the production of the child and the apprehension of the offenders.

Queen Philippa withdrew, and Clisson, having obtained the Countess of Salisbury's permission

to keep the crucifix for the present, retired with Roger to his lodgings in East Cheap. Anxious and distracted, the knight would have continued his melancholy wanderings, but his squire entreated him to take an hour's repose. The child, wearied with all he had seen and heard in the course of the day, soon fell asleep; but Sir Amauri could only revolve in his mind all the probable and improbable authors of the crime, and where they could have concealed the prince.

CHAPTER XI.

"Where is my child?" An echo answers, "Where?"
Bride of Abydos.

WITH the first break of day, Sir Amauri de Clisson left his dwelling, and proceeded to that of the Lord Mayor. Nothing had been heard, and the scouts had not returned: the knight, therefore, bent his steps to the water-side, to obtain, if possible, some tidings of the boatman; for it had suddenly struck him he might be in the plot, and have conveyed him on board some vessel in the river. It was most probable he plied at the bridge, so to the bridge he went. "A boat, a boat, sir?" resounded from all

quarters. Observing an old man who looked more intelligent than the rest, he desired him to row him gently down the stream, and immediately fell into conversation with him.

“Do you know one Gilbert Boymans?” he asked.

“To be sure I do—he is my partner; but the saucy knave got a job yesterday unbeknown to me, and I don’t know what is gone with him.”

“Has he not returned home, then?”

“No, sir.”

“What time did he leave the stairs?—Do you know what company he had?”

“I am sure I don’t know—it was nothing to me; but here is one I dare say can tell you. Humphrey, when did Boymans start yesterday, and who had he got in the boat?—Any of the gentry?”

“Gentry indeed! a pretty sort of gentry—only a woman and a child.”

“ Ha ! and what was the child like ! ”

“ I don't know, sir, I did not much remark the child ; the woman took my attention, she was so tall and blustering, more like a man, to my thinking.”

“ What time did they embark ? ”

“ About an hour after noon, I should think.”

“ Where did they go ? ”

“ Down the river ; but I lost sight of them amongst the shipping : maybe he took them aboard the Dutchman that was to sail with the ebb-tide last night. But where is Gilbert, comrade ? he could tell you all about it himself.”

“ The lazy dog has never returned from his trip.”

“ Put me among the outward-bound craft,” said Clisson ; “ perhaps we shall see him.”

They proceeded in silence a little way, the knight now feeling certain the child had embarked, and was, perhaps, by this time beyond

his reach. He was roused by an exclamation of the old man—

“Mercy on me! there is his boat, sure enough, bottom upwards, and his jacket hanging to it: why, the poor fellow can’t be drowned?”

No, no, thought Clisson; they have taken him on board, that he should tell no tales. “Take me,” said he, “where the Dutchman your friend Humphrey spoke of used to lie; perhaps she is there still.” And so she was. A faint hope crossed his mind as he caught a glimpse of her striped ensign. “I’ll step on board and speak to the captain; but do you wait for me here.”

The skipper, expecting a passenger, met him at the gangway; his heavy features almost relaxed into a smile, as he calculated he was likely to obtain a good freight from his new customer.

“I thought you were to have sailed last tide?” the knight commenced.

“ Yaw, mynheer, so we were ; bot de rascals had not cot all dere coots aboard, and we was a waiting for von passenger. I did not mush mind, for do we had de tide, de wint was dead again us.”

“ A passenger !—who ?”

“ A Deutchman—a weaver.”

“ Tall, or short ? — Had he a child with him ?”

“ Dere is no shild down on my books ; bot de man is ver leetle, so prehaps he tink von bert may do for bote—Ha ! ha ! ha !”

This could not be the right person. “ Have you any other passengers ?”

“ No, no von, ye see ; I am mostly for de coots and marshandize.”

“ Are you sure,” persisted Clisson, “ that a tall woman and a child did not come on board your ship yesterday afternoon ?”

“ Quite sure, as I said ; dere is nobody bot

de leetle Hollander. You be goen to Rotterdam, mynheer?"

"No, I merely wanted to know if a person of that description had taken a passage."

Finding nothing was to be obtained from his visiter, the Dutchman was scarcely civil in his answer to the knight's inquiry if any other vessel had left the port the day before.

"I dare say, many; bot I mint my own affairs: I don't wash all de ships dat go and com."

In despair of hearing anything satisfactory, the knight left the discourteous captain, and returned to his boat.

"I have been asking after my partner," said the waterman, on his stepping into it again; "and there's one here tells me he saw him, and a woman and child, as you describe, embark in a collier—the 'Seafflower,' of Sunderland. I'm sure she could not get below Greenwich last

night, and if we make the best of the tide, we may catch her up, for she can't get out of the river with this wind."

Clisson promising richly to reward him if he succeeded in overtaking the runaways, the man pulled bravely, Clisson straining his eyes as if he expected to see young De Montfort in every ship he passed. He thought the river wound and twisted more than any he had ever seen: it was an age before he arrived off Greenwich, and no vessel that would answer his friend's description, could the boatman discover.

"Go on," said the knight; "she may have made more way than you imagine."

About a mile farther down, the more practised eyes of the waterman descried a small suspicious-looking craft anchored close under the reeds on the south shore of the river.

"That's her, I'll be bound!" he exclaimed, and, redoubling his energies, in a few minutes

was alongside of her. In one more Clisson was upon the deck, and with a beating heart he asked the first sailor he met with if there was a woman and child on board ?

“ Yes,” answered the man.

The exquisite joy of the knight at feeling his anxieties were at last at an end, may be conceived better than described.

“ Where are they ?”

“ Down in the cabin at breakfast.”

“ Let me see them.”

“ Mind what you are about, sir ; the skipper is not over fond of his wife having visitors.”

Clisson thought, from what he had heard of the woman, her husband need not have much cause for jealousy ; but that signified nothing now, and in an instant he was at the cabin-door. If his hopes had been raised almost to certainty, they were now changed as suddenly to despair : instead of Julian and his kidnapper, he beheld a

pretty young woman, about five-and-twenty, with an infant in her arms. He felt that his brain was on fire, that his head would burst ; he clasped his temples with his hands, as if to preserve his senses, and, uttering a cry of anguish, threw himself upon a bench.

The woman, astonished at the intrusion, and the manner of it, was frightened ; but, imagining him to be taken suddenly ill, offered him a cup of water, and called her husband. By the time he answered the summons, Sir Amauri had recovered from the shock sufficiently to be able to renew his inquiries. The man was surly—said he knew nothing of the matter—and, in answer to his question, what was the name of his ship, told him she was the ‘Jane’ of Dunkirk. The woman said nothing, but listened very attentively to the conversation. When the knight rose to depart, she followed him and her husband on deck, and went to that side of the vessel

where Clisson's boat lay—looked at him, to catch his eye, and, as if by accident, dropped a handkerchief she had in her hand into the water.

“ Oh, my kerchief! my best broïdered kerchief!” she exclaimed; and during the confusion that ensued in attempting to regain it, she drew close to the knight—“ Fair hair, large blue eyes?” she asked in a whisper.

“ Yes!” returned Sir Amauri, in the same low tone.

“ Then, King's-head!” she added, and glided away.

The knight, supposing she must mean some house of entertainment with that sign, where he could obtain information, was no sooner seated in the boat than he told the man he should abandon the search, but would be glad to refresh himself ere he returned home, and asked if there was no inn near the shore.

“ Yes sure, St. George and the Dragon.”

“ Is there no other ?”

“ Why, yes ; but that is by far the best.”

“ What other inns may there be ?”

“ There ’s the Flying Dutchman, and the King’s-head.”

“ Whereabouts is the King’s-head ?”

“ That is in a low place, and it is a crinkum-crankum way to get to it : the Flying Dutchman is better than that ; but I would recommend your honour’s going to the George : you ’ll find a plenty there of everything.”

Clisson desired the man to put him ashore as soon as he could, and then paid and dismissed him. He walked on, and soon espied St. George, the sight alone of whose physiognomy one might imagine sufficient to strike terror into any dragon, without the aid of his doughty lance. Fearful lest the boatman should be watching his motions, he went in and called for a cup of wine ; but soon sallied forth in search of the King’s-head.

After making two or three inquiries, and once missing his way, he found it. Lowly indeed was the dwelling, for he struck his head against the doorway as he entered. He sat down, and pretended to wish for some refreshment, then looked round to see if he might discover any person or thing, by which he could learn somewhat of the child. It was a few minutes before his eyes grew accustomed to the dim and smoky light; but remaining there a short time, his attention was awakened by a young man in the dress of a sailor, who was sitting alone, as if waiting for some one, for he had paid his reckoning. How Clisson wished the little Roger had been with him, to determine at once if that were his brother or not! Sir Amauri looked at him, and, after a moment's consideration, caught his eye, went out, and beckoned him to follow.

“What is your name?” said the knight.

“My name? John Smith.”

“Umph ! you are a sailor ; what ship do you belong to ?”

“To the Jane, at your honour’s service.”

Clisson hesitated : the name of the ship was that of the one he had just left. True, this man called himself John Smith, and the person he sought was Gilbert Boymans ; but what was easier than to give himself a feigned name ? He determined to try him in another way ; so, taking out the crucifix, he said—“Do you know this ?”

The young man looked at it attentively.

“I beg your honour’s pardon ; I was not aware : I thought you would have given me the word ‘Sea-flower ;’ they should have told me the sign was changed. We were forced to put back on account of the wind : your honour will find him in Holborn, next door to the Bishop of Ely’s : he is well cared for.

Clisson was so overjoyed at obtaining all this

gratuitous knowledge, that it never occurred to him to secure the informer : he instantly called for a horse, as he thought that would be his speediest way of journeying to London. His sudden change of countenance and look of delighted surprise raised the suspicions of the young man, and he began to fear he had mistaken his confidant. Alarmed at this, he whispered something to the landlord, who nodded his head, immediately left the inn, and taking a boat, tried his chance upon the liquid element.

The knight, heeding nothing, as soon as he could procure a horse, started off into a gallop, but had hardly ridden a quarter of an hour, when the animal cast a shoe. Not daring to stop, he still rode on ; but the poor beast became so lame, he was forced to halt at a blacksmith's forge. A horse was standing there, having just undergone the operation of shoeing.

"Let me have this," said Clisson, "and do

you take mine in exchange, for I am in haste," at the same time dismounting and throwing down a handful of silver.

"Your'n isn't worth much, sir," said the smith, hesitating, and jingling the money in his hand.

"There's more for thee, then, only make speed; I ride on a business of life and death!"

"Eh, sir!" returned the man, with a stupid stare.

"The devil!" cried Clisson, "have you got the rheumatism in your hands, man?" seeing the dilatory way in which he proceeded to ungirth him, praising all the time the qualities of his beast.

Sir Amauri's patience was exhausted; so, saddling him himself, he mounted; but instead of a free goer, as he had been promised, the animal was so dull, that the knight was fain to return for the one he had left at the forge. He

was again obliged to wait. This accident delayed him not a little. His horse was quite blown by the time he reached the bridge, and with difficulty mounted Fish-street-hill. Sir Amauri, leaving him at the first hostelry, determined to make the best of his way on foot to Ely Place.

CHAPTER XII.

There's nothing in this world can make me joy ;
Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale,
Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man.

King John.

HOLBORN was at that time a fashionable residence, and the Bishop of Ely's palace, now Ely Place, was one of the best mansions in London. The knight's direction was to a house next to the palace, and thither accordingly he bent his steps. A man with his hat slouched over his face, entered the house, and shut the door before Sir Amauri quite reached it. This roused his suspicions, and he was more than ever convinced he should here discover something

relating to Julian. The knight knocked, and while waiting until the door should be opened, he had time to feel considerable embarrassment as to whom he should ask for ; he was aware it would not do to inquire for Lord Julian at once, and he did not even know to whom the house belonged ; he resolved therefore to learn that point first ; so before the porter appeared, he darted across the street to a baker's-shop opposite. As a blind to his real question, he asked if my Lord Derby did not reside thereabouts ?

“ No,” replied the man, “ he lives in Lothbury.”

“ I beg your pardon, I thought that house was his next to the bishop's.”

“ No, that is Lady Matilda Jerningham's, the widow, as they call her.”

“ Ah, indeed !” returned the knight ; “ I have business with her. Thank ye, master,” and again he rapped at the lady's door. It was soon

opened by a porter, who in answer to Sir Amauri's question, whether he could see the Lady Matilda, replied in the affirmative, and ushered him into a splendid saloon. The windows were down to the ground, and opened upon a lawn ; flowers of all kinds were disposed about the apartment, and on a pile of cushions the lady herself was seated as if enthroned. She could have been little less than forty ; but by the aid of all the embellishments and preservatives of the complexion then known, appeared to the knight much younger. Two attendants were standing by her ; one from time to time sprinkled essences on her couch and on the floor, which was carpeted from the looms of Turkey ; the other was braiding her hair. Her dress was both sumptuous and elegant ; a white flowing drapery fell in light folds to her feet, and over it was a kind of short pelisse of violet-coloured silk, richly embroidered with silver : it was open in front, and made to display her fine

figure to the greatest advantage. Her sleeves were of the same costly material, and her hands and arms were loaded with rings and bracelets. She bowed her head in acknowledgement of the knight's salute, and with her hand motioned him to a chair. Sir Amauri felt he must say something, but was quite puzzled how to address her; it appeared so strange a place in which to seek for Julian. The lady evidently waited for him. Her two maidens, whose olive complexions formed a striking contrast to that of their mistress, glanced at him in silence. At last he began :—

“Ahem ! madam, ahem ! I believe I have the honour of addressing the Lady Matilda Jer-ningham.”

She bowed.

“I am a foreigner, madam, and unaccustomed to the usages and manners of England. I fear me I have been led into an error, but I thought I should here find a person I am seeking.”

Still the lady was silent.

"May I ask," continued the knight, taking out the crucifix, "if you know to whom this most precious jewel belongs?"

"Jesu Maria!" cried the girl, who was braiding her mistress's hair. The lady turned sharply upon her, and she was silent. The knight was not to be so daunted.

"You have seen it before," he said; but the girl, who evidently stood in great awe of her, pretended to be deeply engaged in the mysteries of her lady's tresses, and took no heed of him; so again he turned to the widow.

"I am no silversmith or dealer in relics, sir knight; wherefore should you suppose I could inform you of the owner of this?"

"Madam," said he, finding it would be useless to attempt further circumlocution, "upon my showing it to a person a few hours since, I was told I should find him whom I seek in this house.

May I beg you to inform me where he is, and permit me to see him ?”

“ And whom may you seek, sir knight ?”

“ The infant son of the Earl of Montfort, who has been most foully kidnapped ; I heard you had taken compassion on him.”

“ What could lead you to form so strange a conjecture ? I have no acquaintance with any of the Montfort family.”

“ That may be, lady ; but I feel convinced that, if a child in distress appealed to you, you would not hesitate to extend your protection to him.”

“ No child has invoked my compassion, sir knight, I assure you.”

“ It is possible, madam, some of your domestics may have stolen my young charge ; no lady can answer for the honesty of all her servants.”

“ I believe I can for mine,” returned the

widow ; “and wherefore should you suspect *them* in particular of so extraordinary a proceeding ? Do you imagine, sir, he is secreted in this mansion ?”

“ I was certainly told, lady, that he was here, or I should not have intruded myself upon you.”

“ You are at liberty to search in all the apartments, if you doubt my assurances that he is not.”

“ Will you declare, madam, that he has not been here this morning ?”

“ Really, sir, I know not. I have many visitors, and a child is not likely to make much impression on me.”

“ That is evading the question, lady. If you do not choose to answer me, I must find those whom you will not care to refuse.”

“ Discourteous knight,” said the peeress, rising from her couch, and waving her hand towards

Clisson with an air of majesty that almost dashed him, "think not I am powerless or friendless. No one has ever yet offended Matilda Jerningham with impunity. Leave me," she added, in the tone of one unused to have her commands disputed.

Sir Amauri, accustomed all his life to kings and princes, queens and courts, cowered beneath the eye of this haughty woman; for a moment he was positively struck dumb, but soon resumed the subject.

"I will leave you, madam; but it shall be to return speedily."

The whole countenance and manner of the lady instantly changed; throwing herself again upon the cushions, with a most fascinating smile she extended her hand towards him. "Sir Amauri de Clisson." The knight started. "Ah! you little thought that you were known to me; perhaps I am better acquainted with you than

you are with yourself. Sir Amauri de Clisson, you are somewhat warm-tempered and apt to take offence : till this morning we were strangers ; from henceforth we shall be friends. I always like to try my new acquaintances a little at first : from the moment you entered I was attracted by your manly bearing. I assure you the child is not here."

There was such an expression of frankness in her countenance as she spoke, that the knight felt it was impossible to disbelieve her.

" May I repeat my second question ? Has he been here this morning ?"

" To tell you the truth, Sir Amauri, he may have been here ; half the court may have been here for any thing. I know to the contrary. I have been enjoying the breeze on the river, and am but lately returned ; I seldom trouble myself to inquire who my visitors have been ; but had the young Lord of Montfort's name been amongst

the list, I doubt not I should have been informed."

"If he has been here at all, madam, it must have been in disguise."

"Then I can tell you nothing, Sir Amauri; but I do not usually harbour kidnappers or stolen children."

This was all very plausible, but it did not satisfy Clisson; finding, however, it was vain to expect any thing farther from her, he took his leave. It was now getting late in the day, but before he returned to his quarters, he again sought Fitzmaurice, in the faint hope of hearing some tidings.

The mayor, who was a prosy consequential man of business, told him he was concerned to say nothing satisfactory had occurred. Two women, whose appearance corresponded very much with the description given by Roger of his mother and sister, had been observed on a waggon going to-

wards Dover; but on inquiry they appeared to be relations of the waggoner, and were both much older than the Boymans were supposed to be. A reward of three hundred crowns had been offered, but had as yet led to nothing. "In return, Sir Amauri," continued the mayor; "what success may I ask, have you had?"

The knight related his adventures; the part of the narrative that most arrested the attention of Fitzmaurice, was that of the young sailor at Greenwich. "I wish you had secured him," he said; "most likely he could have saved us all further trouble; but you may depend on it, sir knight, Julian of Montfort is no longer in England, or at any rate in London; you see there is some connexion between the 'Sea flower' of Sunderland, and the 'Jane' of Dunkirk. It is a very possible thing the boy may be shipped for Scotland, as being a less likely country for us to search than any part of the

Continent, and from whence he could be easily conveyed to France."

"What think you of Lady Matilda Jerningham, my lord mayor?"

"I think her a dangerous person, but one who must be proceeded against with caution, and I am glad you parted with her on good terms. I will reconsider all the information you have given me, and will see you again to-morrow. If, as I believe, he be really sent abroad, I mean to Scotland, we shall obtain nothing by over eagerness; I will, however, despatch messengers to the different ports on the coast, in case this 'Sea flower' should put in anywhere; I will likewise send a trusty servant to Dunkirk to salute the 'Jane' on her arrival, and learn something more of her if possible."

The knight and the king of the city then parted, the former with the full intention of pursuing his inquiries the following day; but it was otherwise

decreed. The harass of mind and fatigue of body he had undergone during the last four and twenty hours quite overpowered him ; he was attacked with a burning fever, and before morning was delirious. The leech said there was something on his mind, and unless that could be relieved, it was beyond his power to do him good.

Philippa, with all a mother's anxiety, could think and talk of nothing but the lost child. The Countess of Salisbury puzzled herself, and all around her, with conjectures respecting the crucifix. King Edward had other and more weighty affairs to demand his attention. Sir Walter Manny was eager to embark ; his supplies being ready, he only awaited Clisson's return of health.

The Lady Matilda Jerningham showed herself daily in her gilded barge on the Thames, with a smile or a word for all the cavaliers who had the good fortune, as they deemed it, to be admitted within the magic circle of her regard. Fitzmaurice

made her a visit ; she not only permitted, but desired he would search the house from top to bottom, and had all her servants summoned one by one to answer the question, if any child had to their knowledge entered the doors between noon on Tuesday, and four o'clock p. m. on Wednesday. They all took an oath to the negative. " Have I seen all your domestics, madam ?" asked the mayor.

" All, excepting one, who was absent at my seat at Richmond ; she left this house on Tuesday morning, so her evidence could only in part corroborate what you have already heard."

Baffled at all points, Fitzmaurice returned to his former belief, that the boy was gone to Scotland ; but one thing surprised him, and from which he had hoped to have gained a great deal ; the young changeling, Roger Boymans, was still left with De Clisson in East Cheap ; his own friends seemed quite to have deserted him ; the child was

daily taken out, hoping he might recognise some acquaintance, but his family remained studiously concealed.

The leech still urging the necessity of tranquillizing Sir Amauri's nerves, if his friends wished to preserve his life, it was resolved to deceive him, and he was accordingly told Julian was found. At first he would scarcely believe it, and desired to see him : but when informed he was lodging in the palace under the care of Prince Lionel's governor, he became more composed, and his mind being relieved from the weight that oppressed it, he was soon in a state to embark for Brittany. Before he went, however, he insisted upon taking leave of his young charge, and was constant in his inquiries how and where he had been found ; hitherto they had been waived, the weak state of his health being alleged as a reason ; but now he began to suspect the whole was a fraud, and that they were still ignorant of Julian's

fate. Sir Walter Manny broke the truth to him as gently as possible, and said that they were now convinced he must have been sent to Scotland or the Continent, and must therefore wait with patience; that they were unceasing in their efforts to discover the child, and Edward had declared that, as he was lost in his dominions, he considered his own honour so deeply pledged to recover him, that he should never rest until he was found.

Olisson at first said he could not meet the eye of the Countess of Montfort without being able to assure her of her son's safety, and therefore it was impossible for him to go to Brittany. Manny strongly opposed his stay, as he really had nothing with which to reproach himself, and it would appear as if he had been guilty of neglect, to say nothing worse. Grieved and afflicted as the countess must be, it would alleviate, if any thing could alleviate her anguish under such circumstances, to hear from Sir Amauri's own lips the

account of her loss, and his attempts to recover him. The knight at length yielded to Manny's arguments, and consented to accompany him. Before he went he requested permission of the Countess of Salisbury, to retain the crucifix until he had no further occasion for it, the child being found or all hope abandoned. She consented on one condition only, that he would never part with it but to her.

The young Boymans, who had all this time remained in the knight's household at East Cheap, for he could not bear to see him himself, never having been inquired for, or noticed by any one, was taken compassion on by Philippa, and enrolled among the list of her future servitors; she did not choose that he should be forgotten, as she thought it was not improbable but that important discoveries might yet arise through him.

Every thing being settled, and their voyage so long, though so unavoidably, delayed, there re-

remained nothing now for Clisson but to take final leave of their majesties, and of a city where he had experienced so much misery. How different was his last from his first interview with those great and glorious sovereigns, and how much, how very much was he altered in a few short weeks; no longer the gay, bold, light-hearted cavalier, the admiration and ornament of the English court, whose only anxiety was to fulfil the commands of the countess, and acquire more favour with his mistress; he was now dispirited and broken down; pale and emaciated, he looked more like a wanderer from the tombs than an inhabitant of earth. His fiery temper was quite subdued, he shrank from observation, yet seemed grateful for the slightest attention; he spoke rarely, and never by any chance mentioned the name of Montfort, or made the slightest allusion to the Lord Julian.

"I fear," said Philippa, as the door closed after him; "I fear the mind of that bold knight

is irretrievably injured, if not gone. See to him; Manny," she continued to the brave Sir Walter, who still remained in the presence. "His was a noble, generous soul; it is a pity his youth should be so blighted."

Manny promised not to neglect her commands, and then kissing hands, and receiving from both Edward and his consort many friendly and condoling messages to the Countess of Montfort, he withdrew.

The following day the troops embarked: the weather had been very stormy for some time; the south-west wind which had prevailed, would have rendered it almost impossible for them to have cleared the channel, even if they had sailed sooner.

From certain indications well known to mariners, the admiral augured a change of weather and a speedy passage; but he was mistaken: his

fleet was destined to encounter the "ocean storms" for many days, and some accidents and engagements were yet to happen, of which at present he and his company little dreamed.

CHAPTER XIII.

Oh, Romeo! Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Romeo and Juliet.

THE Countess of Montfort was not very far mistaken in her conjectures, when she imagined Charles would soon present himself before the walls of Hennebon. In less than a week after the surrender of Rennes, the alarm was given that the French were approaching, and even now within sight of the town. Nothing daunted, she ordered the castle-bell to be rung, and the garrison and citizens to arm for their defence in the best manner possible. The Lord Charles

encamped his men, for he was resolved to besiege the city in a regular way, and not to leave it, until the banner now on the castle walls should be displaced by his own, and the countess, the haughty countess, acknowledge him superior.

The Spaniards and Genoese, eager for action, advanced to the barriers; they were met by a party from the town, and a sharp skirmish ensued, in which the Genoese lost more than they gained. About vespers they all retired to their different quarters.

The next day they returned to the attack, but with little better success. The countess, who had clothed herself in armour and mounted on a war-horse, galloped up and down the streets of the town, entreating and encouraging the inhabitants to defend themselves honourably. She ordered the pavement to be taken up, and the stones to be conveyed to the ramparts, and from thence hurled on the enemy; pots of quick-lime

too she commanded to be brought for the same purpose. Iola, though she could not bring herself to don a coat of mail, was seldom absent from her mistress's side, and performed the office of aide-de-camp in a manner which would not have discredited a more experienced warrior. When not occupied with issuing and fulfilling the Lady of Montfort's desires, her favourite station was one particular turret, whose massive walls screened her from assault, while through a loop-hole she commanded a full view of the field of action. She had planted herself there one afternoon, and though the lengthening shadows warned her that evening was approaching, she still lingered on the spot. Sunset was a favourite hour with Iola; but it was not the glorious purple and crimson which began to tint the sky and robe the sun with departing splendour that now called forth her admiration, for her attention was attracted by other objects. Was she, as she

stood leaning on the battlements, watching the return of the Hennebonese from their excursions? No: her eyes were riveted on a clump of trees that shaded a gentle rising ground a few paces from the city. Two knights, evidently enjoying the evening breeze after a sultry day, had thrown themselves on the turf; their horses, the bridles falling loose on their necks, were quietly grazing by their side. A large dog lay at the feet of one of them. She thought she recognised the knight; she was sure she knew the hound: it must be Guymon, and the knight could be no other than Sir Louis of the Tiger; but she was far more interested in his companion: she could not be mistaken in his falcon-crest or noble carriage, though she had seen him but once before. Strange, she thought, that her rejected lover and the knight who had so lately sent her tokens of his regard, should appear on such friendly terms! Now the words of the

Tiger knight, that "She would one day repent her cruelty to him," were perhaps explained : he had abandoned the cause of Montfort, and had revolted to the enemy. And was her refusal to listen to his addresses really the occasion of her mistress losing a bold and powerful defender ? If she had known that that was the alternative, she would have hesitated ere she so decidedly repulsed him ; yet it made her look on the individual with increased abhorrence. Just at this instant his companion rose, and she turned with pleasure from Sir Louis to gaze on the tall erect figure of him of the Falcon. She leaned her head upon her hand and sighed. It was echoed. She started, and looked round. No one was to be seen ; but in a moment out darted the laughing merry face of Blanche de Marronaye, who had concealed herself behind some of the irregularities of the fortification.

Placing her finger on the side of her nose, and nodding her head with mock gravity, —
“ You will never think of him again, never, never ! What is he to you ? You blush that you ever took an interest in a rebel, or at best an abettor of rebels.”

“ Spare me, spare me ! ” cried Iola, putting her hands to her ears ; “ Oh ! spare me your millery, Blanche, for indeed I am unhappy.”

“ It would make you more so, I should think, to be watching a knight, as you have done these three hours, whom you are determined not to like, and yet cannot help admiring. Everybody is wondering where you are ; the countess has been inquiring for you.”

“ Has she ? But, look there, Blanche ! — who is that ? ”

“ As I live, it is Sir Louis de ——— ! ”

“ Hush ! ” cried Iola, putting her hand before her mouth ; “ do not pronounce his hated name.”

"He is a traitor!" exclaimed Blanche.

"And that is my doing! Now tell me if I have not cause to be melancholy?"

"Not a jot! I should say rejoice rather in your fortunate escape; for, believe me, Iola, if his passion was such that, on meeting a refusal from you, he could forget honour, duty, and fair fame, he was not, and never could be, worthy of you."

"And yet you would have me encourage the suit of yon stranger?"

"C'est toute autre chose, mon amie. He is really and truly a partizan of Lord Charles; and if he believe his cause to be the just one, he is certainly right in supporting it. I am sure, if Clisson were a French knight, I should not love him one tittle the less."

"How came he to be conveying despatches from my lord to the countess, I wonder? I have repeated that question to myself a hundred

times, but have never been able to answer it. Whatever his motives were, I will venture to say they were honourable. Ah, Blanche ! if you could but have seen the look he gave me when I warned him of his enemies ! Besides, he refused all gifts from the countess, though she urged them so strongly upon him."

" If you are not pleading his cause now as eloquently as possible ! Is this the way you expect to reason yourself out of your regard for him ?"

" Nay, Blanche, I only do him justice ; I would not wish to think worse of him than he deserves. Ah me !" she added, moving from the battlement, " I have never since that day been able to drive him from my thoughts."

" Well, now, that is what I cannot understand. I am sure I like Sir Amauri de Clisson very much ; but if he were to stay all his life in England, or go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, I

should certainly discover some knight who would do just as well."

"You would be puzzled, Blanche, to find one who would bear with your caprices as he does."

"Thank you, mistress," returned the fairy, dropping a low curtesy; "but as Sir Falcon, or the knight without a name, has retired, perhaps you will condescend to honour the countess with your company. Why, bless me! how solemnly you walk, as if you were a nun going to take the black veil. I should not like to be a nun;" and tripping on before her, she led the way to the hall, where the countess was engaged receiving reports, and issuing commands for the following day.

The governor, Sir Oliver de Spinefort, was in the midst of one of his long harangues:—
"We advanced towards the party, madam; they were fiercely engaged with a troop of Spaniards;

the Spaniards, you are aware, are a vindictive people; and although this cause is not their own, they fight as if the crown of Castile depended upon the issue. We arrived at a most critical moment, for your grace's party, which was much inferior in point of numbers, was nearly overpowered; their chief had been unhorsed: but we, or I may say I, had the unspeakable gratification of rescuing him. Happy at any time to preserve the life of a fellow-creature, how was my satisfaction increased, when I perceived I had been instrumental in restoring to his friends and followers the brave and revered Sir Godfrey de Reyneval!"

"Sir Godfrey de Reyneval!" exclaimed a dozen voices at once; "is the good old governor of Rennes wounded?"

"Yes, I grieve to say, he is; he has broken his arm, and that, alas! is not the extent of the mischief. I am not acquainted with the prin-

ciples of chirurgerie, and therefore cannot explain as fully as I should wish the nature and effects of this untoward accident, but from appearances I imagine it is a fracture of the clavicle."

"Where is he?" asked the countess.

"Sane and safe," replied Lalala, who at that moment thrust in his head and body, his legs following as best they could. "Sane and safe; a leech has set his arm, and the old lady governor" (nodding and winking at Sir Oliver, who bristled up at this allusion to his lady, and would have resented it, had the fool given him time) "is dressing his shoulder, or his clav—clav—what do you call it, sir governor?—with some bitter herbs, which she says will mend his broken bones."

"Silence, Lalala!" said the countess, "thy tongue is too flippant; this is no place for thee—retire."

"Not yet," said the fool, "not until I have

said my say. Did you suppose, my lady of Brittany, that I came hither to tell this noble company—ooh !—this noble company, that the old lady was a doctress? Quite different; but you must give me time—eeeh !” He looked round, and saw everybody attentively watching him.

The countess, hardly knowing whether to be angry or not, bade him proceed. He marched straight to the door at the other end of the hall, nodded, and was leaving it, when the countess called him back.

“ Ooh ! what contrary commands ; first told to proceed, and now to come back.”

“ Proceed, then, with thy history ; what was it thou wast going to tell us ?”

“ You know that little grove of fir-trees : I was lying on the grass, and quite hid by a mound of earth, when two knights came and laid them down under the trees near me : they did not see me, because, as I said, I was quite hid — ooh !

I did not go there to listen to their conversation; but if they talked so loud that I could not help hearing, it was not my fault. One of them began. Beshrew me! thought I, if that is not —. But never mind who it was," he continued, leering at Iola—"oooh! eeeh! I got upon my knees, and saw that I was right; for I can see as much upon my knees as most of you can upon your feet. One began, and the other answered; some things I heard, and some I did not, though I strained my ears; but I'll tell you what I did hear. No, I don't think I will—I'll proceed."

The countess frowned.

"Nay, never frown at me, my lady, or you will take all the spirit out of my body. Well, you all look so attentive, I think I will go on: there is to be an attack to-morrow upon the south gate; and while we are all engaged in the defence of that, a small body of troops is to enter

at the east gate under the command of ——," again winking at Iola — "and storm the castle."

"By Heaven!" exclaimed the governor, "and a very probable scheme too; I will see to it immediately. My dear lady, their vile machinations shall be frustrated, or, as I may say, their intentions shall only be put in execution to their own discomfiture."

"Thanks, Lalala," said the countess, interrupting him; "you shall have a new cap and bells for this; some would say," she added, smiling, "he deserved to lose them."

"Oooh! eeeh! oooh! eeeh!" His mouth grew longer than ever, and he capered, or more properly, toddled out of the room.

Iola followed him.

"Lalala, who did you say is to have the command of the French forces to-morrow?"

He nodded his head, put his finger on his lips,

tumbled head over heels, and was out of sight in an instant.

“Provoking creature !” cried she, and returned to the countess.

Blanche looked archly at her as she entered.

“You have no curiosity—none !”

Iola felt vexed with herself, with the fool, with Blanche, with everybody. The countess was leaving the hall.

“Did you inquire for me, madam ?”

“Yes, child ; I want you to come and read me the story of Amadis de Gaul ; for I am wearied with listening to Sir Oliver de Spinefort’s long-winded speeches. Had he been wounded, and Sir Godfrey de Reyneval the rescuer, we should not have heard half so much about it.”

Iola, glad to turn her thoughts from her own to fictitious woes, endeavoured to fix her attention, and become interested in the accounts of the knight’s perils and dangers, and so far succeeded,

that she wished the countess good night, if not with a cheerful brow, at least with a heart at peace with herself and all the world.

The next day was to be the false attack ; but, thanks to Lalala's information, the besieged were prepared for it. The enemy were repulsed at all points, and where they least expected it. Iola would not go to the battlements ; she dared not trust herself ; a sort of faint hope once came over her that the stranger knight might be taken prisoner and wounded, not dangerously, but sufficiently to call forth a compassionate interest, and then she would attend him, and endeavour to convince him what a bad cause was that of Charles. Ah ! she little knew the knight, if she expected thus to influence him ; his temper was as resolute as her own, and he would as little have thought of abandoning the claims of the Lord Charles as she would of renouncing the rights of the countess.

There was a loud shout. She listened ; it was

the battle-cry of De Montfort. "Victory! victory!" she heard the Hannebonese exclaim. With a trembling step she went towards the hall; they were bringing in the wounded and prisoners. Fearfully and anxiously she looked around, but he was not there. A little pleased at his good fortune, and yet more than half sorry that he had escaped the silken bonds in which she would have held him, she left the other cavaliers, both friends and foes, to be tended by more compassionate damsels, and went to seek her mistress. She was nowhere to be found, and on inquiry, she heard a tale which only served to increase her admiration of this extraordinary woman. The Countess of Montfort, leaving the defence of the gates to those to whom the task more immediately belonged, "ascended a high tower to see how her people behaved, and having observed that all the lords and others of the army had quitted their tents, and come to the assault, she immediately

descended, mounted her horse, armed as she was, collected three hundred horsemen, sallied out at their head by another gate that was not attacked, and galloping up to the tents of her enemies, cut them down, and set them on fire, without any loss; for there were only servants and boys, who fled at her approach.* The French, who were engaged under the city-walls, hearing the cries, shouted "treason," and hastened to their burning camp.

Iola, alarmed for the result of this daring enterprise, again sought her favourite turret. To her it seemed as though the falcon crest glittered in all parts of the army at once, and wherever it appeared, it brought fresh strength to the enemy's forces; but her interest and her fears were almost as much riveted upon the white armour of the countess, who at the head of her troops awaited the approach of the French knights with

* Froissart.

the greatest coolness. That her life would be particularly aimed at, Iola knew ; her feelings grew almost too intense to be borne, when she saw the black and white plume which shaded her helmet (for yielding to the whimsical conceits of those times, the countess had always worn a black feather since the earl's captivity) vanish among the crowd. She put her hand before her eyes. " Oh, she is killed !" she exclaimed ; but after a moment regaining courage, she ventured once more to look towards the spot, though half afraid of what her curiosity might cost her. Her mistress was again at her post ; her horse had stumbled and nearly thrown her ; but she had recovered her seat, and with fresh vigour renewed the attack. Victory remained for some time doubtful. At length the countess, perceiving her retreat upon Hennebon was completely cut off, or at least that she would risk the lives of her men more than she thought right, in attempting to re-enter it, sud-

denly faced about, and collecting her little army, rode off in another direction. Lord Louis of Spain had gone to his tents, and finding them on fire, immediately assembled a large body of men-at-arms, and pursued the flying countess; he gained upon and came up with her; a skirmish ensued, in which many were slain on both sides; but the countess made good her retreat, and Lord Louis was forced to return, without obtaining any advantage worth mentioning.

Iola, having watched the French troops until they were out of sight, and even long afterwards gazed on the spot where they had disappeared, as if she expected to see the countess return, slowly and sadly descended the stairs. She was met at the bottom by the plausible and imperturbable Bishop of Leon: she would have been glad to have escaped from him at this moment, for her heart was full, and there was something so philosophical in the temperament of the bishop, that

in distress he was the last person from whom she could hope to derive consolation. But to avoid him was impossible; for he stood full in her path; his countenance wore, however, a more feeling expression than common, and his silver-toned voice was almost kind, as he said:—"Ah, my child! I see where your dark eyes have been wandering; you have been witnessing the exploits of our mistress, and have been sighing over her defeat."

"Not defeat, exactly, my lord, since she fired the tents before she fled; but I dread to think lest Lord Louis's force should have overpowered her's; for he appeared to me to pursue her very hotly."

"We will hope she has escaped, her charger is fleet of foot; but tell me, my daughter, has thine attention been engrossed wholly with the dangers and daring of the countess? Hast thou had no glance for any one else?" Iola reddened.

"Follow me," pursued the churchman; "I want to have some talk with thee."

"I believe, father, this is not my hour for confession, and the sights I have just witnessed have made me too sick to relish your ghostly counsel as perhaps I ought."

"Iola Vaudemont ! and are your thoughts so guilty that you are afraid of exposing them to the ear of him from whom you may obtain absolution ! But I wish not to alarm you, my child ! you are not what you used to be ; something grieves you, and I would fain administer consolation."

Saying this he took her hand, and led the way to the confessional. Iola, only half-reluctant, followed in silence ; she was almost glad to be thus called upon, as she felt her interest in the falcon knight stronger than it ought to be ; at times, indeed, so far prevailing over her principles,

that she reluctantly detected herself almost exulting, when one of her own party was overthrown or unhorsed by him. In opening her heart to the bishop, though she never much liked him, she trusted he would give her strength to combat a passion which she knew was worse than hopeless ; yet when she found herself on her knees in the closet, with no mortal ear but his to listen to her tale of weakness, her heart failed her, and she had not the courage to begin. The bishop waited patiently some minutes ; but, finding it in vain to expect she would commence without assistance, he proceeded to give her all the encouragement possible.

“Fear not, my daughter !” he said ; “thy innocent heart can have nothing wherewith to reproach itself.”

“Oh ! but I have, father,” whispered she.
“I am not so guiltless as you imagine. I am

a poor weak, erring girl, but I repent of my sins, indeed I do."

"Tell me what they are, that I may determine, if by penance thou mayest blot out their remembrance."

"Ingratitude, father."

"That is a black fault indeed; but in what hast thou shown ingratitude? Even now thy cheek is wet with the tears shed over thy mistress's discomfiture."

"No, but—but I have—though I strove against it, indeed I did."

"Strove against what, Iola?"

"I believe I felt too much obliged, too grateful, I mean, to the knight who brought us the news of our lord's imprisonment. I thought it was love for the countess that made me like him, but I fear now——"

"What dost thou fear? Speak out, my

child. Art thou ashamed to own that courtesy and courage find an admirer in thee?"

"No, father, but I dared to think of him again; I watched and tended the falcon he sent me. I should not have done this."

"And did he send thee a bird then?" asked the churchman, bending his head still closer to listen.

"Yes, father, and though I said I would not, I have cherished it constantly; but I did it from compassion to the poor dumb thing, for I could not let it starve."

"Truly, thou wert right. Is this the extent of thy errors, Iola?"

"Oh no!" she sighed. "I have watched him from the tower, and I have felt my heart leap for joy when his enemy was vanquished by his arm. I could not have believed I should ever have been so wicked, for you know every victorious blow of his was aimed against the countess."

The bishop almost smiled at the tender conscience of his penitent.

“Thy feelings are very natural, and I do not desire thou shouldst check them. Thou mayest even by thy influence over thy admirer, not only win him to our side, but half the army of Charles; for, from what I have observed, he seems a person of no small distinction amongst them. Nay, for love of thee, he might even betray the Lord of Blois into our hands; for by his adventuring his life for thy mistress, it is evident he bears her no mortal hatred.”

Iola had fancied in the morning the pleasure she should feel in convincing the knight of his error in bearing arms against the Earl of Montfort; but now that the churchman pursued the idea, she wondered how for a moment she could have harboured it, she could only repeat the words of her confessor:—“Betray the Lord of Blois! And do you think, father, Iola Vaudemont, poor

as she is, would ever demean herself so far as to give her hand to a traitor, or encourage treason even among her enemies? No," she added proudly, "let him maintain his loyalty to his prince, and I will maintain mine. I know I must resign him, but I can bear it. I *will* exert more power over myself; you shall see, father, your child *can* conquer a passion when she sees its weakness."

"Nobly spoken. I thought to try you, Iola, and you have stood the test. You resolve to subdue the rising flame, but woman's heart is frail. You may relapse."

"Never!"

"Be not so confident; it is better to guard against it by occupying your mind with other objects. There is one to whom you cannot raise the same objection, who would live and die for you."

He paused, but she made no reply. He lowered his voice and whispered. She started.

"He is a traitor. I have seen him, I am sure, among Lord Charles's forces. I knew his figure too well to be mistaken; besides, I recognised his noble hound."

The bishop looked vexed.—"My daughter, we are all erring mortals; you see what an impression your unkindness has made upon him. Reckless of all, he flies the camp where everything must recall the image of her who is denied to him; if you extend to him the olive-branch of peace, you may have the glory of saving a soul from death, and restoring a bold follower to the countess."

Iola shook her head :—"I cannot, father."

"Dost thou not wish success to the arms of thy mistress? Would'st thou not aid them if in thy power?"

“ With all my heart.”

“ Then restore Sir Louis to thy favour.”

“ Anything but that, father. Ask me anything but that.”

“ Ay, so it is ; anything but the one thing alone thou canst do to promote her interests !”

“ I would lay my head upon the block ; I would endure cold, hunger, any hardship for her sake ; but to——” She shuddered.

“ Oh, Iola ! now indeed art thou sinful ; all you possess you owe to the countess ; she has lost a brave defender from your haughty words : it is in your power to cause him again to draw the sword in her defence, and you refuse. Have you any other means of showing your gratitude to your benefactress ?”

“ No, indeed I have not.”

“ Then is it all profession and empty air : I had thought better things of thee, Iola ; thou hast confessed and may depart, but I cannot pardon.”

He rose to go ; she caught hold of his gown :
—“ Stay, my lord, stay, father. How do I know
that I could induce him to return to his duty ?
He may now be so deeply pledged to Charles,
that it may be impossible for him again to fight
under our banner without incurring fresh guilt.”

“ Not so, daughter : he is still a free knight.
I have seen and conversed with him ; but I will
have patience with thee. Let me hear to-morrow
the result of thy repentant thoughts ; I will not
take thy answer now, I will only place the case
before thee—gratitude in one scale, self-love in
the other. Adieu.”

Iola remained in the chapel long after the
Bishop had departed. “ Is it not enough,”
she said to herself, “ to renounce him whom of
all men I feel I could most love and honour.
Must I make my life miserable by again listening
to the addresses of him whom my heart loathes ?
I am sure, great and generous as she is, the

countess would never wish for the return of that traitor-knight, if the sacrifice of her Iola's happiness were to be the price. She would not demand it. But then gratitude? She has been all to me, as the bishop says. How can I show my sense of her goodness but by giving up my own inclinations? But if I do? If I promise to love this man,—I cannot,—but if I promise to be his bride, what then? I should only regain one lance to her cause; for traitor as he is, he cannot have obtained much influence in Charles's camp. I marvel that the falcon and he should seem on such friendly terms; but Sir Louis, like his tiger crest, is all beautiful to behold, and of fair semblance, and while his claws are sheathed, he may be played with; but if he be affronted, his vindictive spirit knows no bounds. Surely the stranger (I wish I knew his name) must be ignorant that it was he against whom I warned him; or has he, by his arts, attracted him

until the fitting moment arises to make a spring and crush him? Have mercy on him, Heaven! Spare the best, the bravest! Oh! that he had been born a Breton! Then might I have been sinless and happy; but now,—oh! this life is a weary one!”

In this way she ran on, totally forgetting she must resolve upon an answer to the bishop, when the bell tolled for vespers. With more than ordinary devotion Iola joined in the prayers, and besought that if her mistress might have escaped the arm of Louis of Spain, she would speedily return; for she determined not to answer finally her spiritual tyrant without consulting her; she could not, she would not. If the countess, even by a look, seemed to desire this last proof of her attachment, she would give it, though it should cost her her life; but if she urged the contrary, surely, thought Iola, there would be neither occasion nor pretext for thus sacrificing her all on earth.

She dreaded to meet the bishop the following day; but she did meet him, and with a trembling voice told him her final resolution. He looked displeased, but not angry, and calmly said: —“When an offering is to be made, if it be not done willingly and with the whole heart, it is only half pleasing to Heaven.”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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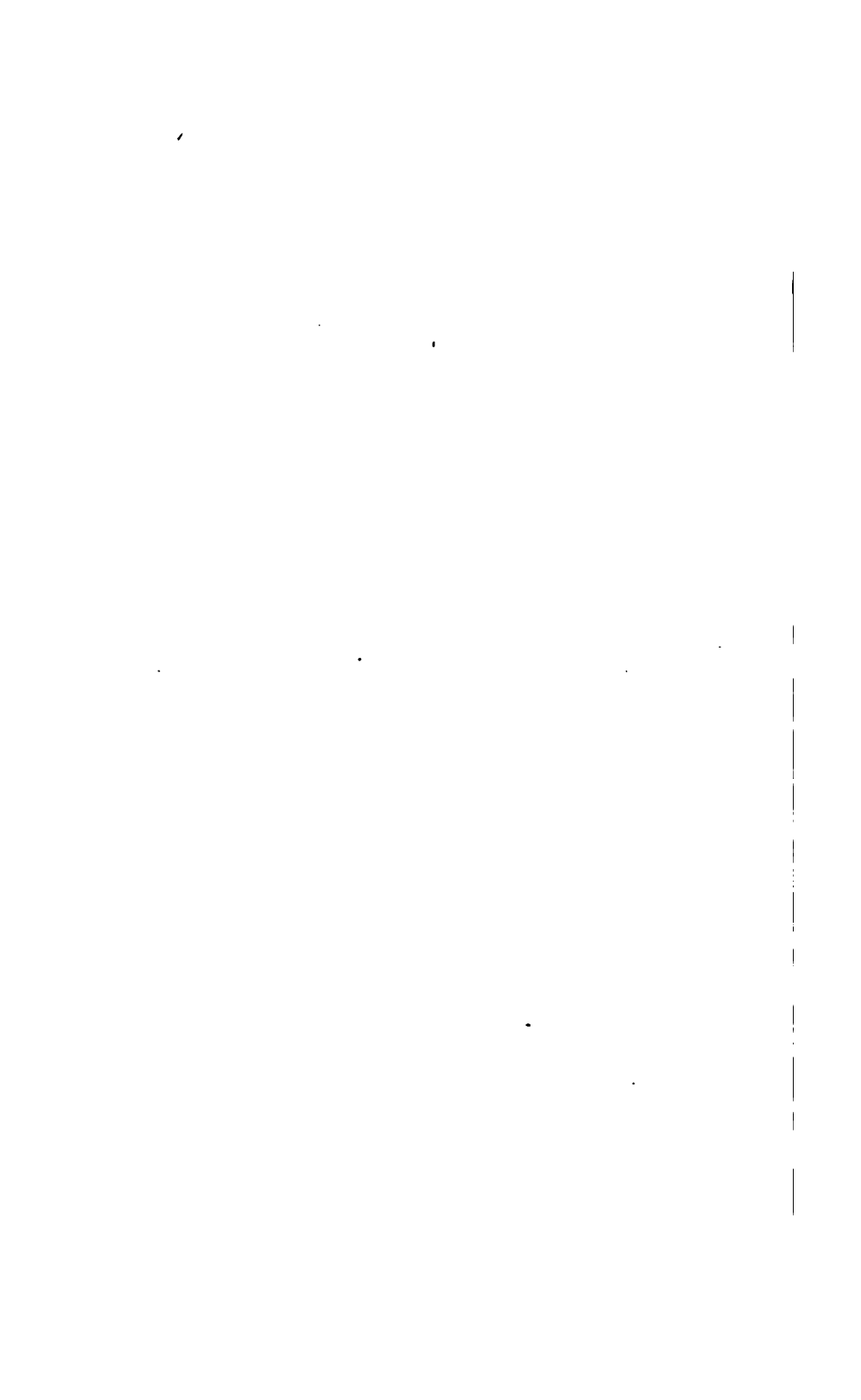
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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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1835.



HENNEBON;

OR,

THE COUNTESS OF MONTFORT.

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XXVI.

—Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;
Thy school-days frightful, desp'rate, wild, and furious;
Thy prime of manhood daring, bold, and venturous;
Thy age confirm'd, proud, subtle, sly, and bloody.

Richard the Third.

WE must now recall the attention of our readers to a person whose existence we fear they must have forgotten, but who formed a conspicuous character in the early part of our narrative—we mean the

friar, who, although occasionally absent for days, and even weeks, yet still constantly returned to the camp before Hennebion, as if fascinated by some invisible spell, which prevented his abandoning it entirely. He was never lively, and very rarely even cheerful, but of late he had appeared more than usually misanthropic. The only thing that seemed to give him pleasure, was hearing the praises of Courtenaye. Whether he had been charmed by the anxiety he showed for Charles of Blois at the time of his dangerous wound, or from whatever cause, certain it is the holy man took great interest in Sir Reginald's affairs, was always ready to assist him with his advice where it could be useful, and would sit for hours in his tent, conning his breviary, while the knight was occupied in repairing any slight fracture in his armour, in tuning his voice to song, or in hearing complaints among his people; who, knowing him to have great influence with the Lord Charles and the Duke of Normandy, frequently applied to him for redress of grievances. Often would the friar raise his

eyes from his book and fix them on the fine intelligent countenance of the youthful knight, and gaze until they swam with tears ; then, if he found he was observed, he would sigh deeply and return to his book.

But although Courtenaye appeared to be his favourite among the gallant sons of France, yet if his presence could be of use, or give consolation to any one, however insignificant, the kind-hearted Father Aldobrand was always ready ; no hour was inconvenient to him, and no distance too great for him ; he lived for others' benefit ; and a proof of his anxiety for the welfare of those who might seem indifferent to him, we shall now proceed to relate.

Sir Louis de Barre was one afternoon sitting alone in his tent, an open letter in his hand, upon the contents of which he appeared to meditate deeply. As his reflections were inaudible, we shall take the liberty of making part of the epistle public, and also what passed through his mind after having read it. It ran thus :—

“ TO SIR LOUIS DE BARRE, THESE, PRIVATE
AND PARTICULAR.

“ MY RIGHT GOOD FRIEND,

“ Knowing you must be anxious to hear somewhat of my proceedings, I send this by a trusty hand, to inform you, that though the lion has not yet escaped from the toils, the mouse is hard at work and must release him ere long. In a few days, I hope to give you the *last* intelligence, but would not delay this, as my messenger is sure, and I feared you might begin to despair.

“ Yours to command,

“ L.”

There was a postscript, but that is not important to this part of our tale.

“ This has been a tedious business,” mentally exclaimed De Barre; “ I had well nigh fancied the arch traitor was playing a double part, but I believe now he will be true for once. In a few days he says—by this time then, perhaps, the deed is done. Wherefore should the thought of

it make me shudder? He must die some time, and surely such a reverend hand would sanctify the blow. Now then there remains but one obstacle. Oh ! Charles ! Charles ! would to heaven a mortal distemper might seize thee, for I care not needlessly to shed thy blood !”

His cogitations were here interrupted by some one at the door of his tent demanding admittance ; he soon recognized the voice of the friar, and bade him entrance, first concealing the paper in his vest. Father Aldobrand rarely visited the black knight, for he met with but little encouragement from him ; De Barre, indeed, had never forgiven his interference in the sickness of the Lord of Blois, and could not throw off a certain feeling of restraint which he always experienced in his presence. But his manners were naturally courteous, and being now almost confident of at least partial success in his schemes, his spirits were rather elated, and he received the friar with gentleness, if not with cordiality.

“ Father !” he said, “ I bid you welcome ; you

seldom honour my quarters with your presence, and I should therefore esteem your visits more highly — I pray you be seated."

The friar without noticing the invitation passed his hand over his eyes, and then looked at De Barre so intently and with such an agonized expression, that the knight almost recoiled from beneath his gaze.

"Have you any important question to ask, father?" said he, and forcing a smile, "do you expect to find the answer written on my brow?"

"I *have* somewhat to say to thee, my son, and it is of the last importance, not only to others, but to thine own soul."

"I thank you, father, for the interest you profess for my soul, but I have long since determined that that must take care of itself."

The friar sighed deeply. "Will neither the fear of man, nor the fear of God, stop thy career of crime? Wilt thou never hear the voice of one who—who would save thee if he could?"

"What mean you, reverend father? I know

not who has cause to complain of me ; my people are contented, the church has no reason to be dissatisfied. I have even given two hundred marks for masses to be said for the repose of my father's soul. I do not understand your insinuations."

The friar shuddered. " Louis de Barre," he said in a solemn tone, " if by such name I am to call thee, thy deeds are registered on high, but it may yet be time to stop the commission of one foul intent ; you may yet be spared the load of the Earl of Montfort's death."

De Barre started. " The Earl of Montfort !" he repeated in a voice of real astonishment, for he could not conceive how his intentions had reached the friar's ears. " As far as I know, John of Montfort is now well, and in safe custody in the Louvre."

" And how long," asked Father Aldobrand, " will he remain so ?"

" Nay, how should I be able to answer that question ? Until he be ransomed, I suppose."

“ Any attempt to impose upon me is needless,” said the friar ; “ I know that you have doomed him to death, and though your own hands may not be soiled with his blood, yet the crime is the same, for it will be committed by another at your instigation.”

De Barre’s eyes glared, and he looked round for his weapon ; his sword lay on the table, he made a sort of half motion towards it, but the friar, without regarding him, continued—“ You attempted the life of Charles of Blois, you kidnapped Julian of Montfort—add not the crime of murder to that of parricide !”

This was more than even De Barre could endure ; he rushed upon the friar, and seized him by the throat. “ Heaven’s curse be upon thee !” he cried, “ for thou must be some demon, or the spirit of darkness himself.”

The friar offered no resistance, and when Sir Louis let go his hold — “ Thou thinkest,” he said, “ that thy guilt was unknown because unseen, but thou art mistaken. Louis de Roubigny, I know thee well !”

The name, though uttered in a voice scarcely above a whisper, sunk to the heart's core of the knight, and deprived him of the power of utterance. He again rushed upon the friar, and with such force that he must have overpowered him, for the knight was in the full vigour of his strength and the friar long past his prime, but he stepped aside, and the knight fell against one of the supporting pillars of the tent.

"I fear not," said the friar, "what thou canst do to me; he who must charge his soul with the murder of his own father, would not shrink from that of him who ventured to accuse him of the deed. But I tell thee, if I leave not this tent alive in half an hour, thou wilt hear more of my visit to thee."

Sir Louis staggered, and foamed at the mouth. "In God's name, who art thou? None knew of the manner of his death but myself. Art thou the arch-fiend, and didst thou come hither to torment me, and give me a foretaste of the pains of hell?"

"Listen," replied the friar; "I came not to recall a name which has been so long buried in oblivion, for any vain purpose, but to prove that it is useless attempting concealment from me. I know all that has happened to thee. I would entreat thee to reflect on thy past enormities: recollect, thou wast once a favoured, favourite child, and would have shrunk with horror at the bare relation of such wickedness."

"It was my father's fault," returned the knight; "if he had curbed my passions then, I should not have had his death now to answer for. He paid dearly for his folly, however," he added, with a ghastly grin.

The friar put his hand before his eyes for a moment, his lips moved as if in secret prayer, but the agony of his soul was evident from the cold dew which stood upon his forehead, and the distension of the large blue veins which swelled as though they would have burst the skin. "Louis de Roubigny," he said again, "wilt thou do one thing to prove thou hast some small remains of conscience left?"

“What dost thou ask?” said De Barre, for we shall continue to call him by the name he had borne so long.

“Write a billet, signed with thy name and sealed with thy seal, to command the base accomplice of thy crimes to stay his murderous hand. Say thou wilt not have the Earl of Montfort’s blood upon thy head; that, if he be doomed by God to die, thou wilt not be accessary to his fate.”

“And dost thou think, father, the bishop would believe the writing? He knows I am firm of purpose; that what I have resolved I have resolved; that nor heaven nor earth can change my determination; and he would treat the billet as a forgery.”

“Is he then so deeply plunged in crime? Has he so totally lost all recollection of his holy calling, as to suppose repentance impossible? Roubigny, I was not always what I now am; this Franciscan habit covers a heart that once beat with all the worst passions of human nature. My hands

were never stained with the life-blood of a fellow-creature; but there are words which are sharper than a two-edged sword, and he who abuses the gifts of Heaven has much to answer for. I thank God that I was made sensible of my errors, and that he has graciously given me time for repentance. From my inmost soul, I pray that he will be equally merciful to thee."

"Tush! father!" returned De Barre. "Talk thus to him who makes a clean breast once a month; but I, who have not seen the inside of a confessional for years, could not recall all my sins now if I would; and what signifies one death more upon my conscience? I shall sleep as quietly in the grave notwithstanding."

"Fearest thou not the tortures of purgatory and the fires of hell?"

"I fear nothing, father; neither the one nor the other can be worse than the torments I *have* endured."

"If thou wouldst have those torments diminished, write, I conjure thee."

De Barre was silent a few moments, as if considering the friar's advice. Reflecting that in all probability the Earl of Montfort was ere this beyond the reach of human protection, he resolved to indite an epistle, agreeably to the friar's request, but first to obtain his promise not to divulge the secret. With this intention he said after a short pause: "Father, I have been reflecting on your admonitions, and will obey them; but I entreat you to maintain a rigid silence on the subject; no one doubts your honour, and if you promise to conceal the transaction, I shall be satisfied."

"I give you my word," said the friar.

De Barre then seated himself at the table, and in a few minutes wrote a laconic epistle to the bishop, desiring him to leave undone that which they had decided upon some weeks back. He signed and sealed it; then, turning to the friar, asked how he had become acquainted with the conspiracy.

"That signifies nothing to thee now," returned Father Aldobrand; "if thou return to the

path of virtue, thou shalt never suffer from my knowledge of this foul plot. But I must not longer delay ; give me the letter." He took it from De Barre's passive hand, and hastily quitted the tent, leaving him in a state more easily conceived than described.

His fears for the result first predominated. "What !" said he, "have I been weak enough to allow myself to be bearded by a friar ?—I, who have scorned the powers of heaven and hell, to suffer a few canting phrases to unman me !—To resign a dukedom at the command of a priest ! I will after him, and reclaim the paper." With this intention he went to the door of his tent, but the holy man was nowhere to be seen. "Curse my folly !" he exclaimed, as he returned to his couch. "But, hold !" and drawing the bishop's letter from his bosom, "what is the date of this ? Seventeenth of October. Yes, yes, there will have been time enough ; his messenger, whoever he may be, must have the

velocity of light, nay, must have power to restore the dead to life, if he can save John of Montfort now. I need be under no apprehensions ; yet, would to Heaven I had the *last* intelligence, as he calls it !”

In spite of his endeavours to reason himself into a state of calmness, he was restless and uneasy ; he rose from his seat, paced his tent, and, finding it impossible to banish care, resolved to drown it in wine. He called to his page, and emptied cup after cup, until recollection of the past became less vivid, and therefore less painful. But his deep potations, if they subdued the fever of his mind, rendered the confinement of his chamber the more irksome to him ; he whistled for his dog, and sallied forth, in the hope that the cooling breeze might relieve his aching temples, and a solitary walk restore him to equanimity.

In the mean time the friar returned to Sir Reginald's tent. “ Courtenaye,” he said, “ I have a mission for thee.”

"I am ready at all times to do thy bidding, father," returned Courtenaye; "what may be your commands?"

"I cannot disclose the whole of my intention and purpose," said the friar; "but you are sufficiently acquainted with me not to doubt either my honour or honesty: you must mount and ride with the speed of an arrow to Paris, and convey this letter to the Bishop of Leon, who is at present residing there."

"And whereabouts in that large city shall I find him?" asked Courtenaye, observing the paper had no address.

"There you must display your skill, my son, but most probably in the vicinity of the Louvre; at all events, you must take up your abode in that quarter, keep a jealous watch upon the prison, and if there be any endeavour made for the Earl of Montfort's escape, give instant notice of it."

"Then you have intelligence that a rescue is about to be attempted?" said Sir Reginald.

“ I have my suspicions, my son, I confess ; but delay not your preparations.”

“ Will you that I go alone, father ?”

“ No,” returned the friar ; “ your own loved St. Valery may accompany you, but let him not know aught of your intentions ; keep him in ignorance of the purport of your journey as far as is possible : he is faithful, but he is young, and I fear his discretion is not greater than his years.”

Courtenaye retired for a moment to give the necessary orders, and then returning, asked what course he was to pursue in case the earl had already eluded their vigilance.

“ You must then,” replied the holy man, “ return upon your steps, and inform me. There is yet one more instruction I must give you : should you meet any person who looks as if he were the bearer of a despatch, stop him, and inquire whence he comes and whither he is bound. Should he say from Paris, make no scruple in searching him, for he will have a paper

most likely, nay, certainly, concealed in some part of his dress. I trust, however, you will meet with no interruptions. Tarry not, Reginald—you are bound on an errand of life and death."

A page here entered, saying the horses were saddled, and St. Valery waited.

"Anon," answered the knight; and turning to the friar, said, "Give me thy blessing first, father."

The holy man laid his pale thin hand on the head of the young adventurer, and whispered, "God Almighty bless and keep thee, my son! Even in this world shalt thou be rewarded; Providence hath gifts in store for thee, and much happiness awaits thee, even where thou least expectest it."

Courtenaye rose, the friar watched his departure, and then, throwing himself upon his knees, breathed for him a long and fervent prayer; perhaps a supplication for De Barre mingled with his aspirations; for, low as he was sunk in guilt, Father Aldobrand would have given his all to have

wiped out the stain of one, even the least of his crimes ; and at the very time Sir Louis was endeavouring to stifle every thought of Heaven and a future state, the old man, whose life a few short minutes before he would have sacrificed to his fury, was engaged in deep and ardent entreaties that the blood of Christ might not have been shed for him in vain.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“——To what issue will this come?”

Hamlet.

COURTENAYE lost no time in obeying the friar's instructions, and he and his squire, both mounted on the fleetest horses he possessed, were no sooner beyond the limits of the camp, than they put their speed to the proof. St. Valery expected his master was charged with some important message to the Lord Charles at Aurai, and was therefore not a little surprised when he found that he took a contrary direction, and rode straight for Rennes.

Well, thought he, this world is a strange one ; it was but yesterday Sir Reginald said we had the prospect of remaining many weeks yet before

this obstinate town, and now he flies from the place as if it were infected with the plague, and bids me make all speed, without even vouchsafing to give me a reason. Ah ! he is looking behind him, perhaps he intends telling me now. No ; Courtenaye called to him, but it was only to ask him if the horses were well shod, and could perform a long journey ; and having received the squire's answer in the affirmative, showed no inclination for farther discourse. St. Valery was therefore again reduced to follow the train of his own thoughts. To start on an expedition just before sundown was such a singular determination ; for his part, he would have chosen the first of the morning, before the dew was off the grass, for his exploits.

On they rode, however, for many a league, until the night beginning to close, and the horses to exhibit symptoms of distress, Sir Reginald slackened his pace. Now, thought Eustace, he is certainly going to trust me with his secret, for I am sure he has one. Again the

curious youth was disappointed ; the knight was too much wrapped in his own reflections to think of gratifying his companion.

“ If you intend, my lord,” at length ventured St. Valery, “ to pass the night at Ploermel, we must not delay, or the gates will be shut.”

“ I intend to pass the night in my saddle, Eustace : we are bound for Paris, and must not rest longer than is absolutely necessary, ere we reach that city.”

This effectually silenced the squire’s remarks, but it only increased his astonishment : he mused and pondered, but could devise no reason for his lord’s riding in such haste for the metropolis.

It was midnight, and neither moon nor stars were visible, which rendered travelling fatiguing and difficult, especially to our hero, who was but little acquainted with the road. The picture of a saint, with a lamp behind it, threw a light, however, on a small building, which Courtenaye discovering to be an inn, resolved upon halting for an hour to refresh himself and his follower,

and give their horses a little rest and provender. From one or two questions he put to mine host, he found he had missed his way; and, as it was in vain attempting to regain it in the dark, he determined upon remaining there until morning broke.

With the first gleam of light they were once more on their horses; but they had to retrograde considerably ere they fell again into the track. Sir Reginald avoided the little town of Ploermel, by taking a path to the right, which rejoined the main road soon after, and they travelled on until the sun had performed three parts of his course, with only one short interval of rest. Courtenaye sometimes feared the strength of their steeds would fail; but he was not destined to try it to the utmost.

A league on the south-west of Rennes they met, to Courtenaye's eyes, a person of most suspicious appearance, though, to a common observer, there was nothing remarkable about him, excepting the rapidity of his progress and the

reeking state of his horse, which looked as if he had not ceased galloping since morning. The man was in the dress of a valet, and very lightly accoutred : such as he was, however, Courtenaye stopped him, and demanded whither he was going.

“ To Hennebon,” was his reply.

“ And whence comest thou ?”

“ From Paris. I pray you, sir, detain me not, or my life may be the forfeit.”

“ I must keep thee a moment,” said the knight, “ but only until thou shalt have delivered up the letter with which thou art charged.”

“ I bear no letter,” returned the man, with a look of amazement.

“ Then, wherefore art thou in such haste ?”

“ Because, fair sir, I must deliver myself and my horse to Sir Louis De Barre ere to-morrow's dawn.”

“ Why must thou ?”

“ Nay, sir knight, I am ignorant ; I only know that I was promised a purse of fifty crowns

if I would perform that service. Few could have been found to undertake it; but fifty crowns is not to be obtained every day, so I thought it worth while to stretch a point. I can give you no farther information, gentle sirs; I entreat you, therefore, let me go."

"Not quite yet," said Courtenaye; "thou must dismount, and suffer thyself to be searched."

"What right have ye, my masters, to set upon me, an unarmed traveller, who have offered ye no wrong?"

"It may appear a hard case," replied Courtenaye, "but I have no alternative; so, do as I tell thee instantly, or I must use another language."

The man made an effort to escape from them, but St. Valery stopped him.

"Nay," said the squire, "you must obey my master's orders, or you may chance to rue it."

Very reluctantly the man dismounted. Eustace tied the horses to a tree, and they proceeded to examine the pouches and folds of the

stranger's dress, but could discover no letter, nor anything that might serve as a communication between the bishop and his accomplice. Sir Reginald, disappointed, was almost inclined to let him depart, when his squire suggested the possibility of something being concealed in his saddle. The man said he was certain there was nothing there ; but, without regarding him, St. Valery took it from the beast, and quietly ripped it open with his dagger. Still no paper appeared ; but as the knight grew more and more anxious, he felt convinced that there must be a despatch ; and determining to omit no method of obtaining it, he turned to the man—" Friend," he said, " thou hast been promised fifty crowns to present thyself at Hennebon ; I will give thee one hundred to betray thy trust."

The man looked perplexed. " A hundred crowns is a hundred crowns," said he ; " one can't obtain that sum every day ; and if I knew where to seek, I would tell thee, fair sir ; but I know

not. I do not believe there is any letter or paper ; I think the sight of me alone is some private signal, though of what I cannot inform you ; and therefore, most noble gentlemen, you should give me the hundred crowns if you delay my journey."

Courtenaye smiled at the man's argument, and although he felt extremely unwilling to waste any more time in what now appeared so useless a search, he still thought there must be some place of concealment which he had not yet discovered. St. Valery had thrown the saddle aside, and was feeling the bridle in case anything might be hidden in some part of it ; when his master, taking up the rejected saddle, imagined he saw a trifling difference in the flaps ; there was nothing remarkable in the appearance of one, but the edge of the other looked as if it had been split asunder ; he was not long in unripping it, and with little difficulty drew from it a small packet, which he eagerly opened, and read as follows : —

“ TRUE AND WELL-BELOVED FRIEND,

“ Fortune has smiled upon us. With mine own hand I have ended all the earl's sorrows in this world. Give the bearer fifty crowns ; you will see me shortly.”

The knight read the letter a second time to make himself certain of its horrible contents. “ So all is over,” he said to himself, “ and Jane of Montfort, the high-minded, the noble, the generous, is a widow and childless ! What misery may not one bad man cause ! And Iola, her devoted bower-maiden, will be broken-hearted. Would to God I could restore him to life !” and he struck his forehead in bitterness of soul.

“ That same letter is a melancholy one, methinks,” said St. Valery, venturing to interrupt his master's musings. “ What will you, fair sir, we do now ?” he added.

“ Ride back to Hennebon,” answered the knight. “ And as for you,” he said, turning to the messenger, “ although thou hast not aided me,

thou shalt have the hundred crowns, but thou must bear me company."

"It is growing late," said Eustace; "would it please you halt this night, if we could find a hostel near at hand, the horses would be better able to retrace their steps to-morrow? for, poor beast!" he continued, stroking his master's favourite Quentin, "they want a little rest."

"Knowest thou of any inn or house of entertainment?" asked Sir Reginald of the messenger.

"We are not far from Rennes," replied the man, "where you may have all you list, as it is in Lord Charles's hands."

"Ay," returned the knight, "but I would fain shorten my journey to-morrow, not lengthen it. What is that large building I see among the trees?"

"I know not," said the man, "I am a stranger in these parts; some old castle I take it."

"Well," said the knight, "we will e'en try if the owners will give us a night's lodging, or at least a feed for ourselves and our horses;" saying

this, he remounted, and obliging his prisoner to ride between himself and his squire, bent his way to the chateau.

It was quite embosomed in trees, and the path which appeared to lead towards it was wild and untrodden. With some difficulty the party threaded their way, for in many places it was quite overgrown with brambles and brushwood, and was so circuitous, that, although the castle appeared but a short distance from the main road, it was full half an hour ere they stood before its gates. St. Valery tolled the bell, which looked so red and rusty, and moved so stiffly, that it would seem its iron tongue had not spoken for many a long day. Its deep hollow tone made them start, but no answer was returned save by the echo and the wind moaning through the trees, for it was a chill autumnal evening.

“Try it again,” said his master, “surely the place is not deserted.”

This time it rang with better effect, for after waiting about five minutes, footsteps on the other

side were heard, and a voice, like that of an old man, asked who was there, and what they wanted.

"We are three travellers," answered Sir Reginald, "come to beg shelter for the night; our horses are weary and would fain rest awhile in your stable, and taste your provender; but we have money in our pouches, and will faithfully pay for what we take."

There was whispering on the inside of the gate, and then the voice said, "We keep no hostel, fair sirs, and our lord is not at home, therefore I cannot bid ye enter. You had better go on a league farther to Rennes."

"We can scarce get out of this copse," said St. Valery; "it was bad enough coming here, and it is now growing so dark we shall never find our way back again. Try him once more, my lord."

"Good friend," said the knight, "you surely would not be so barbarous as to turn three way-worn travellers from your door this night; it is blowing up for rain, and we shall hardly be able to retrace our steps, unless you will show us the way."

"As ye got in, so ye may get out," returned the man in a surly tone. Then there was more whispering, and evidently some altercation between two persons, and they could distinguish a female voice. This gave Sir Reginald some hopes.

"Fair lady," he said, "I appeal to your compassion—can you bid us depart? We will not harm you; nay, as I said before, will pay for all when take and somewhat besides."

"But there are three of you," said the dame, "and this place is very lonesome."

"Nay, then, we shall make it all the more cheerful," rejoined the knight; "at least open the gate and look at us: I give you my word on the honour of a knight not to enter except with your permission."

"There, Paul," said the woman, "I told thee he was a knight; come, undo the bars directly."

"Thou art so imprudent, Margery; but what will not woman risk for the sake of a little company?" The bolts and bars were then slowly and

cautiously withdrawn, the old man muttering to himself all the time, and stopping every now and then as if hesitating whether to continue his work, his helpmate at the same time urging him to proceed, as the large drops were beginning to fall, and it would be a pity, she said, so sweet a young gentleman should be exposed to the weather.

At length the gate was unlocked, but it was only opened a little way, just far enough for the old man to put his head out and reconnoitre the besieging party. His wife with some difficulty obtained place for one eye over his shoulder, and both being apparently satisfied with their scrutiny, they permitted the knight and his two companions to pass.

“Have ye no lord or lady to whom we may pay our devoirs?” asked Courtenaye.

“No, sir, alack!” replied the dame with a shake of the head; “our lady has been dead five and twenty years come martinmas, and our lord is as bad, for he has never been home these—I for-

get how long. But come, Paul, take the horses to the stable, while I lead these worthy sirs to the castle."

They dismounted; St. Valery followed the old man with the steeds, and Sir Reginald, accompanied by his prisoner, who gazed on all around with stupid wonder, attended the old woman through a court and a postern-door, for she said the grand entrance was never used, there being only herself and her husband. She conducted them to a large hall, and placing a lamp upon the table, said she would bring them a faggot.

The place looked so cold and desolate, that the knight begged she would spare herself the trouble, and allow them to share their host's apartment and supper. To this she would not at first consent, as she was sure her visiter was of gentle blood, and ought not to eat with serving-men; but the knight again requesting permission to be received at their board, her reluctance yielded, and she told her husband, who just now

returned with Eustace from the stable, she was right glad they had admitted the strangers, for the handsome gentleman had no pride at all, and was going to sup with them.

“ You forget, Margery,” said the old man
“ why can’t the gentles have the hall ?”

His wife looked confused.

“ Because this fair knight does not like it.”

“ Indeed, good man,” said Sir Reginald,
“ your cheer is sufficient for us, and a blazing hearth, which I doubt not we shall find in your kitchen, would be far more acceptable than a large and cheerless hall.

The man drew his wife aside, and after a consultation of a few minutes, said he could not allow the company to demean themselves by passing the evening in the kitchen, but would show them a smaller apartment, if they listed, and Margery would soon kindle a fire.

Courtenaye felt sure there was some mystery connected with their refusal to admit him to their apartment, but said nothing ; and the old man,

taking his lantern, led him and his followers through a long passage, (the knight's armed heel making the gallery ring again as he went,) which conducted to the foot of a wide stone staircase. This they ascended, and crossing a broad landing, proceeded down a corridor, near the end of which the old man stopped, and, putting his light on the floor, unfastened a door, which opened into a chamber of far smaller dimensions and more comfortable aspect than the former.

The old woman had taken another and shorter way, and they found her on her knees before the fire, blowing some sticks with her breath. In a short time she lighted a huge log, whose crackling blaze made the apartment look warm and cheerful.

"I brought ye here, sirs," said the old man, "because the ground-floor is damp and infested with rats, and ye would not sleep well, I trow, with them for bedfellows."

"Thank ye, thank ye," said Sir Reginald; "now can you give us somewhat to eat?"

"Directly, sir," answered the man; and soon

the worthy couple returned, bringing meat, bread, and eggs; but for liquor, they said, they could only offer water.

“That is poor enough this cold night,” said Courtenaye; “ye surely are not such anchorites as never to taste the juice of the grape; have ye nothing in the cellar, my good man?”

“Maybe there is, fair sir; but I am not over fond of those underground-places at any time, and especially at night, for the ghost of my lady sometimes walks there, and I have no fancy for seeing her in her grave-clothes.”

“But I have,” cried St. Valery, with all the eagerness of youth; “I should like to see a ghost above everything; I’ll go with thee.”

The old man looked the very picture of astonishment at such a declaration.

“Ye may go alone, then, for I will not accompany you,” he said.

“Nay, gaffer,” replied the squire, “that I can’t do unless you will show me the way; but I’ll defend you—I have got a good sword, and

you may say your prayers backwards if we see anything to alarm us."

After a little more solicitation, he consented, and in about a quarter of an hour Eustace and the man returned laden with some choice old wine, having met with no adventures by the way. Their hosts then left them, and Courtenaye and his squire sat down to table—the prisoner, who showed not the slightest wish to escape, establishing himself at a respectful distance.

For some time they were all too much occupied to speak; but after he had nearly demolished the contents of his trencher, St. Valery broke silence.

"This certainly is," he said, "the most curious place I ever was in; but we are regular prisoners, Sir Reginald, for I don't think any one could find his way out if he did not know it, there are so many crooked passages."

"You may depend upon it, Eustace," replied his master, "we should discover an egress, rather than be detained here against our inclination."

“I would not be that old gaffer, and be obliged to live here, for anything,” returned the youth; “I never saw such a dreary mansion—it is more desolate than anything you can imagine,” and he drew his bench nearer the fire. “I wonder to whom it belongs?”

“That is a question I cannot answer thee,” said the knight; “and I would advise thee, instead of wasting thy time in idle conjectures, to dispose thyself to slumber, for with the first peep of dawn we must be in our saddles.”

The old woman soon after entered, bringing a few blankets and a flock mattress for Sir Reginald, and, wishing them a good night, was departing, when he called her back, to say that, as they would early leave the castle, perhaps her husband might not be up, and in that case——”

“Troth will he,” interrupted the dame; “good night, fair sirs,” and left them.

The prisoner had placed his settle close to the wall, and he soon fell asleep. Eustace dressed a couch for his master, and then stretching himself

on the floor, followed the example of his companion. Not so the knight—aleep had forsaken his eyelids, and for some time he could muse on nothing but the disastrous fate of the Earl of Montfort. All was still in the castle ; but as the wind whistled and moaned through the trees, it sounded in his ear like a requiem for the dead. He rose and went to the window ; a few stars were struggling through the dark-grey sky, but their light was so feeble that a glow-worm would have been bright in comparison. “ Ah ! ” thought he, “ I am like yon stars—in vain are all my efforts to shed one ray of hope or usefulness ; fate seems against me : had I but known of this vile plot one week earlier, I might have saved the earl, and spared Charles the odium which must now fall on him ; for none will believe but that he has connived at the assassination. Oh, De Barre ! wherefore is it that thou art to blight all my prospects, and turn all I taste to poison ? ” He leaned his arm on the sill of the window, and his head upon his arm, wrapped in these melancholy

and almost despairing reflections, when a sound struck him, unlike what he had heard before, for it resembled neither the wind, nor the heavy breathing of Eustace and the messenger. At first he thought it must be the blast; but, listening more attentively, he discovered it to be the voice of a person in distress, and appeared to come from an inner room.

There were only two doors to the apartment which he now occupied, the one by which he had entered from the corridor, the other which was used by the people of the house. Sir Reginald opened the smaller door, but nothing was visible; he went close to the wall, and could distinctly hear a female voice, but could not understand what was said: then another answered. The tones were not strong enough for him to distinguish the words, but it appeared to be the language of complaint. He endeavoured to push aside the tapestry with which the wall was covered, and, at last, one place gave way, where it divided, and disclosed a door. This door he

easily opened, and then found himself similarly situated in another room, namely, behind the tapestry. Evidently the door of communication had not been wanted, and the tapestry had been hung over it to conceal it and prevent the draught. He moved stealthily, and made a small hole in the arras with the point of his dagger, sufficient to see all that passed within.

The chamber appeared to be about the same dimensions, and furnished in much the same style, as the one he had just left. A fire was burning on the hearth, and a woman was seated on a stool near it. Courtenaye could see plainly it was not his hostess, for, although past middle age, this person was neither so old nor so feeble as Margery: as far as he could judge, she was tall and muscular, with a strong cast of features, and excessively plain. He did not see the person whom she was addressing, nor did he understand the language she spoke, but the tones of her voice were harsh and disagreeable, and were answered only by tears and sobs. Sir Reginald

listened in vain for the person's reply ; after a time, the woman rose to replenish the fire ; Courtenaye then had a full view of her auditor, and, after a moment's consideration, he closed the tapestry and returned as quietly as possible to his couch.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The expectancy and rose of the fair state.

Hamlet.

THE extraordinary scene of which Courtenaye had just been the unobserved witness, entirely banished sleep from his eyelids the remainder of that night ; he could only wonder at and admire the hand of Providence which had so marvellously conducted him hither at so critical a juncture, and form thousands of projects for turning his information to the best advantage. Anxiously did he wait for morning, and not more tedious had the hours appeared of that (to him most memorable) night when he guarded his armour in the chapel of St. Michael, prior to his receiving the accolade from Charles's royal hand. For a moment he envied Eustace and the messenger, who, all unconscious

of what was passing so near them, slept soundly, heedless of yesterday's events, and caring still less for those of the morrow.

Scarcely was the first glimmer of dawn visible in the east, than the knight roused St. Valery and his companion from their slumbers, and bade them haste and prepare the steeds. He followed them to the stable, and early as it was, old Paul was already stirring, and very willingly assisted in their preparations for departure, at which he appeared not a little to rejoice. He thanked Sir Reginald for his liberal remuneration, and wished him God speed on his journey.

To St. Valery's great surprise, the knight, instead of putting his horse to the gallop, immediately on leaving the little copse which surrounded the castle, proceeded gently in the direction of Ploermel for a couple of hundred yards. He then called his squire to him, and drawing him aside, but only so far as to be out of ear-shot of the prisoner, though still retaining him in sight, he whispered a few words in his ear. St. Valery's

countenance by turns expressed the various emotions of surprise, indignation, and pleasure at his communication ; he hesitated a moment, and but a moment, and then turned from him and rode away towards Ploermel, as if he cared not to leave the print of his horse's hoofs on the road. Sir Reginald gazed at him until no longer visible, and even afterwards lingered, listening to the rapid tread of his horse, until that too died away in the distance ; he then, desiring his companion, who stood gaping with wonder at this extraordinary movement, to accompany him, retraced his steps and quietly took the way to Rennes.

The sun was just appearing above the horizon, and the clouds of vapour rolling gradually off from the city, displayed the lofty grey towers of the old castle. There was scarcely a breath stirring, and the busy hum of men had not yet broken the stillness of the night. As the two horsemen passed along the streets, many a burgher and matron, and some few damsels with coif awry and hair dishevelled, peeped from behind the shutter,

to discover what might be the cause of such unusual sounds at this early hour. The old men shook their heads, and prophesied more wars, or at least some extraordinary event; the dames returned to rest grumbling at their own curiosity in being thus induced to leave their couches almost before the sun; but the maidens gazed awhile longer on the noble figure of the knight, and the gallant animal he bestrode, and marvelled much at his uncouth attendant.

Little heeding, indeed unconscious of their wonderings and surmises, Sir Reginald made straight for the castle gates. "Who knocks?" inquired the warder.

"Sir Reginald de Courtenaye," was the reply, "who desires to be admitted to the governor."

"He has hardly yet risen," answered the watchman, "and loves not to be disturbed."

"Give me a lodging then," said the knight, "until it shall be his pleasure to receive me, and something wherewith to break my fast."

The name of Courtenaye was too well known

among all Lord Charles's followers to permit of the knight's demanding entrance a second time. The bolts were quickly withdrawn, and dismounting, he with his follower was ushered into a large hall, where an enormous watch-fire, around which the guards were still reposing, was the most agreeable spectacle. The knight could not but recall to mind the first day he had entered those walls many months before, when he sought out the imprisoned Sir Godfrey de Reyneval, with the offering of a falcon for his then almost unknown mistress.

He was aroused from the pleasing meditations to which these reflections naturally led, by a message from the governor, requesting his presence. To Courtenaye he was personally unknown, and there was nothing in his appearance which would induce our knight to desire a farther acquaintance than was necessary for the accomplishment of his wishes. After a first introduction, he informed him that he was accompanied by a person whom he had taken prisoner the day

before, bearing despatches under very equivocal appearances. He desired he might be watched and guarded, but at the same time well treated and supplied with all he might require, as he believed the man to be innocent of any bad intentions. The governor was extremely desirous to be made acquainted with the contents of the important papers, but Courtenaye declined gratifying his curiosity, and after an interchange of civilities he departed.

We will there leave him, and follow St. Valery, who never drew bridle until his horse dropped down from exhaustion in the middle of the street at Ploermel. It was somewhat past mid-day; but without staying to taste food longer than the time necessary to saddle a fresh steed and give directions for the careful tending of his own, he again started, and halted not until he arrived before the camp at Aurai. Without speaking, he gave his horse to the first person he met, and made directly for the spot where the banner emblazoned with silver lilies proclaimed the dwelling

of Charles. The man-at-arms who paced before the entrance of the tent, seeing St. Valery hastily attempt to enter, placed his axe across it, and demanded who and what he was that thus rudely would break in upon the prince's privacy.

"I am body-squire to Sir Reginald de Courtenaye," answered the almost breathless Eustace; "admit me instantly to the Lord Charles's presence. I entreat, nay, in the name of my master, I command you."

"The Lord Charles has desired not to be disturbed," replied the man, "and I dare not disobey his orders."

"At your peril," returned St. Valery, "refuse me admittance."

The sentinel reluctantly withdrew the barrier, and desired a page to announce the visiter. Scarcely waiting for permission, St. Valery entered, delivered his master's message to the astonished ears of the French prince, and then retired to take that rest of which he stood so much in need.

On the second morning after that on which

Courtenaye and St. Valery separated, a party of seven horsemen might be seen moving along the road we have lately had so much occasion to describe between Ploermel and Rennes. The first was clothed from head to foot in plate-armour; but his helmet being close and adorned by no crest, there was nothing which might lead a spectator even to guess at his name or rank, saving his spurs, that badge of knighthood. He was closely followed by a man-at-arms carrying his shield, which was triangular and bore no device. A second held the bridle of a led horse; and these were succeeded by four others, all advancing in double file.

The party rode on in silence, until they reached the brow of a hill near Rennes, when the leader of the party halted, and stood for some moments with his eyes fixed on an object which, from the distance, appeared scarcely larger than a black speck. It soon increased in size, and, as it neared them, a single horseman was plainly discernible. The knight desired his attendants to remain where

they were, and rode forward alone to meet him. The recognition appeared agreeable to both ; but the second knight evinced great respect for the first, and turned his horse to accompany him. They then fell into a long, and, it would seem, an interesting discourse ; the six men-at-arms, by their master's command, following at a sufficient distance not to impede unreserved communication. In this manner they proceeded until they came to the bridle-path which led to the castle.

“ My lord,” said the second-named knight, “ if it so please you, I and five of these varlets will remain close at hand in the wood, while you and one man-at-arms advance to the castle ; the old seneschal would recognise me, and, it might be, would object to renewing our acquaintance.”

“ Nay,” replied he of the plain shield, “ it signifies not if he should recognise thee, Courtenaye ; he can object to nothing I may order. I will that thou accompany me, but that all excepting one remain here until I call them.”

They then made for the gates. The wary old

man answered the summons of the deep-toned bell by inquiring who now claimed entrance.

“Open the gates!” said the knight in an authoritative tone.

Paul, with the same caution he had observed on a former occasion, did as he was desired, but scarcely wide enough to admit a mouse. He liked not the appearance of his guests, and was going surlily to close the portals, when the stranger commanded that he should let him pass, at the same time putting his hand through the small open space between the doors. Paul turned pale, and as if by magic the doors were made to turn on their rusty hinges, and the knights and the shield-bearer rode in.

“What is your pleasure, fair sir?” asked the still trembling warder.

“That you conduct us instantly to the chamber occupied by this knight a short time since.”

Paul looked at Courtenaye, and with rather an ill grace showed them to the apartment; and by the stranger’s command left them, somewhat re-

luctantly, muttering to himself. Sir Reginald then desired the man-at-arms to remain in the chamber, and moving as noiselessly as possible, led his companion through the hidden door into the apartment he had visited by that access when last he was in the castle. Making an aperture in the tapestry, they distinctly saw the whole interior of the room.

The same two persons were there, but exhibited now in a far more amiable light. The woman was seated at her wheel, and singing in a powerful but not unpleasing voice an old English ballad, which ever and anon she interrupted to explain to a fair young child, who was amusing himself with firing from a small cross-bow at the figures in the tapestry. His back was towards the unseen spectators, and what little noise they made was drowned by the woman's voice. After many vain attempts he lodged a quarrel in the head of a stag, and as much delighted as if he had shot a fat buck in the forest, he ran to the

dame, exclaiming, "There now, Alice, see what I have done!"

"What!" cried the woman, stopping short in her song; "you must not make holes in the tapestry: what will old Paul say?"

"I don't care for old Paul," returned the boy.

"But I am tired of sport, and I want you to tell me a story of Robin Hood and his merry men. I should like to have been Little John, and you should have been Maid Marian,—eh, Alice?"

The woman smiled, but she complied with his request; and the child seating himself beside her, listened to her tale with the deepest attention.

"Are you quite certain?" whispered the knight of the plain shield to Courtenaye.

"I could lay my life, my lord. I have seen him only once, but I am no true man if that same fair boy be not Montfort's heir."

"It is a prize worth securing," said the other, "but it should be accomplished quietly. I like not to break in upon them from hence."

"Suppose, my lord," said Courtenaye, "as I am better acquainted with the mazes of the castle than you, that I seek out the old seneschal, and oblige him to admit me by the proper entrance; while you remain here and prevent any escape, should they have notice of my approach.

"Well spoken, Courtenaye; do so."

Sir Reginald then left him, and after a little search found old Paul, but the man positively refused to show him the way to the chamber. He said it had been locked up for many a year, that it was haunted, that he dared not go, and there was nothing to see if he did.

"Of that allow me to judge," said Courtenaye; "thou mayest not disobey the commands of him who but now passed the gate."

"How came he by that signet-ring?" muttered old Paul; "surely it could not be——: I shall be killed, I shall be murdered if I let you go. Have mercy, fair sir," continued he, falling on his knees.

"No harm shall happen to you, good man, if

you obey my orders. Lead me to the chamber."

"Allow me to speak first but one word to my dame to bid her adieu, fair and honourable sir?"

"I know what thou wouldst say to her," replied Courtenaye; "but thou needest not yet take leave of her. Do my bidding," he added impatiently.

Fearful of rousing his anger, Paul preceded the knight, whimpering as he went, and lamenting his unhappy situation.

"I know perfectly well who occupies that apartment."

The man stared—"How could you?"

"That signifies not," continued Courtenaye; "but I would not wish to frighten either the dame or her child, therefore I desire thee to go forward and announce my approach."

Paul, believing the knight must really have some communication with evil spirits, now no longer hesitated to obey him, but tremblingly opened the door, and said, a knight to him un-

known desired admittance. Courtenaye was so close behind him, that ere the woman had time to recover from her surprise, he stood before her: the child screamed, and hid his face in her gown.

"Lord Julian," said Sir Reginald, "you have no cause to fear me; come hither: do you remember me?"

At the sound of his name and his native tongue, he looked up, but still clung to his protectress.

"Who are you?" inquired the woman, in no very gentle accents.

"That matters not, mistress; I do not wish to alarm you; no insult is intended, but I must introduce another visiter. Come forth, my lord."

The person behind the tapestry then advanced, and not caring longer to conceal his face, desired Courtenaye to relieve him of his head-gear, which he did, and discovered the features of the Lord Charles of Blois.

"I demand," said the prince, "by whose authority, and by what means, you obtained possession of this child?"

The dame, by this time, had regained her self-possession, and advancing a step in front of the two knights, and placing herself in an attitude of defiance, demanded, in her turn, the reason of their coming, and by what right they asked those questions.

"By right of this," returned Charles, showing her the signet-ring.

"I see that is a ring," retorted the woman; "but it is nothing to me; I know nothing about such things."

"It is something like one papa used to wear," said the child, venturing towards him, and taking his hand; "but you are not papa."

The prince sighed. "Woman," he continued, "answer me; I am Charles of Blois, rightful Duke of Brittany."

"Not now will I answer you," said the woman; "my hour is not yet come: you appear

to know the child, although he does not recognise you, and I can offer no resistance if you choose to take him from me by force ; but you shall learn nothing from me."

" I can make thee rich if thou wilt unloose thy tongue," said Charles ; " or I can make thee bitterly repent if thou still persist in silence."

" Neither your threats nor your bribes will have any influence with me : Alice Macauley fears no prince in France ; and though you put me to the torture, you should not obtain one syllable from me."

" We waste time, my lord," whispered Courtenaye ; " I have no doubts as to who is the author of the plot ; and touching the manner of its execution, the child can inform us at some future day."

" Nay," said Charles, " I am in the humour now ; there are hours enough before us : " then turning to the child, he bade him relate his adventures.

" If you command, my lord, I may not gain-

say you," said Courtenaye, interrupting him ;
" but you must be aware your presence will be
desired in the camp, and I ought not to delay
my return to Hennebon."

" Well, then, do thy list, Reginald ; but I
will have the tale some day."

Courtenaye then desired the man who waited in
the outer room to call in his companions, bidding
them leave their steeds in the yard below.
" Paul," he said to the old seneschal, who with
his wife was not far distant, " you and your
good dame must suffer a kind of honourable cap-
tivity ; but within these walls you may roam
where you please. You shall hear more from us
anon ; but you need be under no apprehensions
for your own safety. You," he continued, turn-
ing to Dame Alice, " have literally been in con-
finement since you came hither, and so will re-
main during our good pleasure."

Paul and Margery, with many bows and curt-
sies, thanked the knights for their promises of
protection ; and so that no personal danger ac-

crued to them from this violent seizure of the castle, they cared little for the event. Alice vouchsafed no reply, and in sullen silence watched them leave the chamber

A man-at-arms was placed at the door, the communication between the rooms was closed, and another guard ordered to stay in the outer one. Two more kept watch at the gate, and Charles desired the other two should remain to relieve their comrades; and, as it was impossible to recognise him in his unadorned armour, there could be no objection to his travelling with no other escort than Courtenaye.

The knight reminded him that they must separate where the road branched off to Hennebon; but, indignant at any insinuation which might imply timidity, Charles declared he had no more cause for fear than Courtenaye—his person was still more concealed, and, with some bitterness, added, that he flattered himself he was as well able to encounter any chance foe he might meet as was Sir Reginald himself.

The Lord of Blois then mounted the horse which had been led thither ; and Courtenaye following upon his faithful and favourite Quentin, they both left the castle.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Away, we know that tears are vain,
That Death nor hears nor heeds distress :
Will this unteach us to complain,
Or make one mourner weep the less ?
And thou that tell'st me to forget,
Thy cheek is wan, thine eyes are wet.

Hebrew Melodies.

ALTHOUGH Courtenaye had detained the bishop's messenger, the dreadful intelligence of which he was the bearer in a short time reached the camp before Hennebon, and even penetrated within the walls of the city. It was communicated to the countess as gently as possible by Sir Godfrey de Reyneval ; but in spite of all his precautions, the truth burst upon her at last,

almost as suddenly as if she had been unprepared for such an event. She did not weep; intense sorrow seemed to have dried up the fount of her tears; but her very calmness had something fearful in it. She moved with the stillness of a ghost, and smiled, when Iola addressed her, with so unmeaning an expression, that the maiden was alarmed, and used all her efforts to rouse her to a sense of her situation; for she appeared to have been bereft of the power of comprehending the full extent of her loss. Her most soothing attentions were unavailing; the countess sat for hours without uttering a sound or a complaint, her hand in that of her attendant, and her eyes fixed on vacancy. At last the tears, which refused to flow at the solicitations of kindness, were called forth by a person, the last in the world who might have been expected to excite them.

Lalala, having just heard the fatal tidings, regardless of all forms, rushed into the room, and threw himself at the feet of his mistress. "God have mercy upon you! my lady," he cried; "our

master murdered ! Lord Julian gone ! What have you left ?”

“ Julian ! Julian !” said the countess ; and dropping her head on Iola’s shoulder, “ Thank Heaven,” she whispered, “ my husband was spared that blow !” She heaved one or two convulsive sobs, and Iola felt the burning drops fall on her neck. She did not attempt to restrain the feelings of her mistress ; and the latter being now able to relieve herself by weeping, gradually attained a more natural tranquillity, and endeavoured to resign herself to the decrees of Providence.

The struggle was a severe one ; but she had so long been schooled by adversity, that her spirit, which was once so proud and lofty, seemed as subdued and gentle as that of a penitent child. She confined herself for a time to her chamber, and refused all consolation. Sir Godfrey de Reyneval was the first admitted to her presence, and in him she found all the kindness and attention of a father.

The Countess of Montfort was not the only mourner in the castle. Blanche wept over the destruction of all her lover's hopes ; for she felt sure the escape had been planned and executed by him. She dreaded his return, and yet she chid the hours for lagging on their course. She had never really doubted her affection for him ; but now she felt it even stronger than before ; she would be all the world to him, and although she could not hope to restore him to cheerfulness, she might sweeten the cup of sorrow, which she feared was now full even to overflowing.

Grieved and thunderstruck as were all the lords and knights in Hennebon, it was necessary to resolve on pursuing some measures in consequence of the Earl of Montfort's death. Sir Godfrey marvelled much that the bishop and Sir Amauri did not return ; for as they both left the castle so nearly at the same time, he could not but conclude that they were parties in the unfortunate enterprise. Sir Walter Manny suggested it was not impossible Julian might still be

discovered, and that therefore it would be unwise to give up the city at present.

Sir Godfrey de Reyneval strenuously opposed the idea ; he advised that the countess should resign the duchy to Charles, and retire to England. The boy in all probability was murdered ; and it was encouraging hopes which he felt sure must be ultimately blasted, if she remained longer in the castle. Yet who should be the unwelcome counsellor of a surrender ? That was a task from which all shrunk ; and therefore it devolved upon Sir Godfrey. The countess listened quietly to all he said, but replied, that she could not yet resign all hope of again beholding her child. Sir Godfrey repeatedly urged her to yield to Charles, and at last obtained a reluctant consent, stipulating, however, that her people should not suffer from their loyalty to her, and should enjoy the same privileges as the other subjects of Charles and Jane. Her agreement being obtained, Sir Godfrey de Reyneval, Sir Oliver de Spinefort, and Sir Walter Manny deliberated on the exact

terms they should make, and when a herald should be despatched to the camp.

Lalala's long ears heard the report almost before it was whispered abroad. At first it made him moody and sullen, but after a while he changed his humour, and became more absurd and ridiculous than ever. As an excuse for his gaiety in the midst of others' distress, he said they were under great obligations to him, for if it were not for his fooleries they might as well be all in the tomb.

A few days after this, and the very morning when the castle was to be given up, Blanche came running breathless with haste into Iola's chamber, with a white pigeon in her hand. "Look here!" she cried, as soon as she could speak, "I have found him!"

"What! your old favourite," said Iola, "whom you thought was gone for ever? Where did you discover him?"

"So strangely," replied Blanche, "that I must tell you. I was sitting at work, thinking

not of my bird though, nor indeed of any bird," (she sighed,) "when I heard a noise as of something pecking at the window. I opened it, and my dear lost pigeon flew in and nestled himself as he used to do in my bosom. I was so overjoyed at recovering him, that for a moment I did not notice his uneasy motions; for he fluttered his wings in a most extraordinary manner. After endeavouring to discover the cause of his agitation, which at first I thought was his delight at seeing me again, I observed a little piece of paper under his left pinion. You may guess I was not long in opening it, and I read the strangest jumble of rhymes that was ever composed. Here they are:—

Some walk, some fly,
Some sleep, some die—
The tower stood, but stands no longer,
Yet the oak may still shoot stronger.
When the bird shall meet the beast,
When the dead shall join the feast,
That shall be found which hath been lost,
Yet one must weep who erst laugh'd most.
Keep the castle three weeks longer,
If you'd have the oak stand stronger.

"Did you ever hear such nonsense? I can't make anything of it."

"I can," said Iola; "at least, some part I understand, though who may be the author I have no idea."

"Well then, Mistress Iola, with your wisdom I pray you to enlighten me."

"In the first place, we are not to yield the castle for three weeks."

"Thank you, that is plain enough; I can read that."

"That shall be found which hath been lost," means Lord Julian," said Iola, "you may rest assured; besides, don't you know that the crest of the Montforts is an oak branch?"

"Yes, said Blanche; "but it says, 'When the dead shall join the feast,' and that is impossible, at least I hope so; for it would spoil my feast, I am sure, to see a corpse march up and take its station at the board."

"The tower stood, but stands no longer," must be the earl, I suppose," said Iola; "for

he was as a tower to the countess : she used to cling to him like ivy to an old wall ; but when the tower fell, she changed her nature, and stood like the oak."

"Nay, Iola, your simile does not hold. As long as she thought the tower was in existence, she was fearless and erect ; but, now it has crumbled to dust, she will never, I fear, raise her head again."

"Yes, she will," returned Iola, "or I am much mistaken ; her spirit is as enduring as it is lofty."

"Well, but what is all this about birds and beasts," said Blanche, "and 'One must weep who erst laughed most ?' I am sure nobody laughs now. Heigh-ho ! we are all sorrowful enough, unless it be that stupid Lalala. I'll tell you my opinion, Iola, though I do not pretend to any superior wisdom : the pigeon must have been stolen, and now returned with this doggerel in order to deceive us. I dare say it is some stratagem of the enemy."

“Nay, we were on the point of surrender: surely no enemy would advise us to delay yielding the castle; it must be an unknown friend.”

“I wish Sir Amauri de Clisson would return,” said Blanche. “I don’t care about the bishop; but Sir Walter Manny is all courage, and Sir Godfrey de Reyneval is all prudence, and I think Clisson has a share of both, and he would advise us.”

“He is not troubled with too much of the latter quality,” said Iola: “I should be right glad to see him again nevertheless. But, Blanche, I think you ought to show this paper to the governor.”

“What! to Sir Oliver de Spinefort? No, I am obliged to you; he would prate over it for an hour. I will take it, if you please, to the countess, or Sir Godfrey.”

“To Sir Godfrey then; I do not like disturbing our lady.”

“I shall benefit him by your commentaries, however,” said Blanche.

"I will come with you," rejoined Iola; so saying, the youthful pair hastened to the good old warrior, who had just given the flag of truce his last instructions.

"Stop, stop!" cried the dark-eyed maiden to the herald as he left the hall. "Delay your errand a few moments; I must speak to Sir Godfrey ere you depart."

"What brings you here, fair ladies?" said he. "I am afraid you are too late to assist at our council, for it has just broken up."

"Not too late though to stop your decisions, Sir Godfrey," replied Blanche with an arch smile, giving him the paper.

"Hey! what have we here? poetry!" He read it through three times with attention. "It quite surpasses my powers of comprehension," he said. "How did you come by it, Blanche?"

She informed him of the messenger, and where and how she had received it.

"Most extraordinary!" he exclaimed. "However, we can do no harm by obeying its injunc-

tions. The bearer of our terms of capitulation cannot be far distant."

"He is yet in the hall," said Iola; "for I would not allow him to go until I had made you acquainted with our intelligence."

"Does the countess know of it?" inquired Sir Godfrey.

"Not yet," replied Iola. "We thought it better to obtain your advice previously to informing her; for since the Earl of Montfort's death she appears to care for nothing."

"This would imply a hope that all is not lost," said the knight. "We will therefore show it her."

The countess was at first as much perplexed as had been the old governor; but eager to snatch a ray of hope, however faint, she soon thought she discovered in the mysterious verses a promise of Julian's safety; she approved of Sir Godfrey's attending to its injunctions, and determined to wait the three prescribed weeks.

"I will wager anything," said Blanche, "that

that paper comes from Sir Amauri de Clisson. He has discovered the place of Julian's concealment, and mentions that time, as he feels confident he shall be able ere the period shall elapse to restore him to us."

"I wish it may be so," said Iola; but although she believed it herself, she feared to raise her mistress's expectations, lest they should be disappointed; for she rightly judged a second overthrow of her hopes would prove even more fatal than the first.

While these events were taking place within the city of Hennebon, far other scenes were enacted without the walls in the French camp. Sir Louis de Barre, hearing of the death of the Earl of Montfort from another quarter than the bishop's messenger, concluded of course that the man was detained; but he did not believe the murder could be discovered, however explicit the churchman might have been, as the paper was to be so perfectly concealed in the saddle, and the messenger, according to the bishop's advice con-

tained in the postscript to his former epistle, which we withheld from the reader, was to be ignorant of what he was conveying. Courtenaye was absent ; he concluded, therefore, that he had most probably seized the courier ; but he felt under no alarm for that circumstance, as the man, should he be disposed to turn traitor, would be totally unable to assist him in his search. He felt, however, there was now no time to be lost ; he must make a bold stroke for the dukedom while Charles remained at Aurai, and ere the report of his treason could be bruited abroad. The friar was his greatest obstacle ; he was once inclined to use poison, but a feeling he could not comprehend withheld him. He dared not employ any direct measures against his life, but it was absolutely necessary to his purposes that he should leave the camp. As he knew the holy man more than suspected the sincerity of his repentance, he could devise no scheme for procuring his absence, but forging a letter from Charles, desiring him to come to him immediately

at Aurai. But Sir Louis was not an adept at caligraphy, and he feared to intrust his plot to a clerk. After much deliberation, therefore, he altered his plan, and resolved to select one of his own people, on whose fidelity he could rely, to pass for a follower of the Lord of Blois, to ride into the camp from the direction of Aurai on a jaded horse, himself covered with mud, and exhibiting signs of fatigue, and to desire the friar to repair instantly to Charles, who, he should assert, was on his death-bed, and, having heard much of his fame, desired to see him. Promptitude was one of the characteristics of De Barre; he weighed his projects well, but no sooner had he decided what course to pursue, than he took measures for the instant accomplishment of his views.

In little more than an hour after this, a single horseman, lightly armed, rode into the camp, and hastily inquired where Father Aldobrand might be found. His complexion bore the marks of a more southern climate, for it was of the dark hue

of a Moor; but his tongue smacked of the Norman. He stammered in his speech, and appeared much agitated. The Franciscan soon answered the summons, and the man entreated him, if he had any Christian charity or compassion for the suffering prince, to lose not a moment in hastening to Aurai. "He feared his master," he said, "could hold out but a short time longer, and he had earnestly requested to see the friar." Father Aldobrand, somewhat surprised, asked if the Lord Charles had been wounded, or what ailed him?

"A grievous wound," replied the man, "and, I fear, a mortal one; but haste thee, father, for the love of God! You can ride surely; will no knight furnish a steed?"

A horse was soon procured, and the friar on his road to Aurai. The Moor then led his horse to a distant part of the camp, and gave him into the charge of some of the Spaniards.

Soon afterwards a man quietly lifted the cur-

tains of De Barre's tent, and presented himself before him.

"Thou lazy hound!" exclaimed the knight, "art not gone yet?"

The man smiled. "It is all done, Sir Louis: the friar is beyond the lines by this time."

"Ah! what! did he not recognise thee?"

"It would have been impossible. I wish, my lord, you could have seen me, you would scarce have acknowledged your faithful Guilbert in Lord Charles's Moorish soldier. But I have somewhat to tell you, honoured sir, which you will not like to hear, perchance. Charles is no longer at Aurai; he is gone to Rennes,—at least, so I heard but half an hour since from a man who had just left the camp, and I took the liberty of knocking out his brains by way of thanking him for his information."

"To Rennes!" muttered De Barre; "No, no,—I shall go distracted!—He must have——. What do you stand there for, you impudent

varlet, watching and spying me? Get thee gone!"

"Hey-day, my lord! If this is to be my reward for all my toil and trouble, I'll seek another master, who will at least give me fair words for my pains."

"Hold!" said De Barre, laying his hand upon his arm: "forgive me, Guilbert, I am not what I was; I have many cares which weigh upon my spirits and sour my temper. Leave me now, but be within call, for I shall have need of thee shortly, perhaps."

De Barre paced his tent, as was his wont when agitated; he tried to collect his ideas, but it was some time before he could arrange them sufficiently to resolve upon his next step. The information that Charles was not at Aurai, overturned his plans; he feared that something had been discovered respecting Julian and the chateau de Roubigny, yet in what way he could not imagine; but still, he could propose no reason

to himself for his lord's going to Rennes; and guilty conscience furnished but too readily the true cause of his absence. He might return upon Hennebion any day, for, having once left his camp, it would not be at all improbable that he should visit the Lord Louis of Spain before he returned to it. "He must be prevented," De Barre exclaimed; "and if Courtenaye could be arrested too—— Guilbert!"

The man quickly appeared at the summons, and listened with eager attention and firm resolution to his master's instructions.

"Delay not," said De Barre; "you know your reward."

The man swore to accomplish the knight's wishes, and left him, prepared to do his bidding.

Early the following morning De Barre appeared among the troops with a letter in his hand, and a countenance bespeaking the deepest affliction. "Soldiers!" said he, "they who heard the tidings of last night will be prepared for what I

have this morning to communicate—Charles of Blois is dead !” A murmur ran through the assemblage ; some veterans, who had known him from his youth, hastily brushed the tear from their eyes ere it should become visible ; others again, who felt but slight interest in a man who had been but little among them, expressed more surprise than sorrow ; but by almost all, the news was received with evident marks of astonishment. Sir Louis paused, as if to command his feelings, and then proceeded. “ Yes, my friends, he for whom we have shed our blood and wasted our strength, now feels no longer ; but the manner of his death is what harrows up my soul—he died by the hand of a murderer ! The particulars have not yet reached me. To him it now imports nothing who is Duke of Brittany ; but there is one left—one mourner in the tent of the Lord Charles, whose claims to the duchy are as strong as ever—the weeping, broken-hearted Jane ! Answer me, knights and men-at-arms, will ye abandon her because her lord sleeps in the

grave? Will ye cringe to the lioness of Montfort?"

"Never! never!" shouted all.

"I knew it," said De Barre; "but I was resolved ye should speak from your own hearts ere you heard what our lawful duchess commands. She addressed a letter in the first bitterness of grief to Sir Reginald de Courtenaye, but desired, in case of his death or absence, it might be delivered to me—for the Duke of Normandy, to whom she would most probably have written, is, you know, at Paris. In this epistle she entreats, for her dead lord's sake, that you will not abandon her cause, but obey my commands until she can appear amongst you. She further states, that she knows this declaration will create jealousy in the breast of the Lord Louis of Spain, and therefore trusts you will defend the person and cause of her champion, if they should be attacked. Had not the falcon knight been at a distance from us, I should not have presumed to offer myself as your leader; but having the au-

thority of her whose merest wish should be a law to all loyal hearts, I fear not to proclaim myself general of this noble army, and entreat you to redouble your exertions to place the royal Jane upon the throne of Brittany."

This extraordinary speech was listened to in silence ; but no sooner had the knight concluded, than the feelings of the multitude broke out in various ways. His own immediate followers shouted loudly, " Long live Sir Louis De Barre ! —long live the Lady Jane's champion !" for in the aggrandizement of their lord they looked forward to their own advancement. The Spaniards muttered curses, deep if not loud. Some knights stood aghast, being totally unprepared for any event of the kind ; and a few ventured to request a sight of the lady's letter, for, as it had been intended for Courtenaye in the first instance, they concluded there could be no private instructions.

Sir Louis readily yielded it : it was written in a female hand, and much blotted with tears.

Whether it were the genuine production of her whom it professed to be, no one could answer, for no one was acquainted with her autograph: however, there was no reason to doubt its authenticity, and by far the larger part of the army readily acknowledged De Barre as their commander, and the few symptoms of discontent which showed themselves, were easily quelled. The fickle goddess seemed again to smile upon the knight, and he fancied himself borne on her triumphant wheel at a rapid pace; he assumed more state than heretofore, but showed not only much willingness to attend to the complaints of the people, but so much anxiety to redress their grievances, and was so lavish of his silver, that ere twenty-four hours had passed over his head, he might have aspired to become husband of their supposed widowed mistress, and duke of Brittany.

CHAPTER XXX.

Alas ! by what strange chances virtue's cross'd ;
Love first a rescue plann'd ; its service crav'd,
Emotion was on tiptoe — overwrought ;
Then cries of anguish o'er the hero lost,
Mix'd with exultings o'er the hero sav'd,
And life and death were to the balance brought.
To him that falls, a sad, but proud reverse,
When the freed monarch kneels beside his hearse.

ANON.

IN the mean time Charles and Courtenaye had left the chateau where the young Lord Julian was confined, and journeyed on at an easy pace. There was no such immediate haste for Charles's return to Aurai, and having made a rapid journey from that place, he was the less inclined to hurry now. Courtenaye was anxious to arrive at Hennebon, but he liked not the idea of leaving his mas-

ter before he was obliged, and finding Charles ill-disposed for quick travelling, was content to slacken his speed.

Their conversation naturally turned on the fearful events of the last few days. "Courtenaye," said Charles, "pr'ythee tell me something of this horrible murder of the Earl of Montfort, for I do not yet understand by whom it was committed, or for what immediate purpose? Did you not say you met a courier bringing the intelligence?"

"I did, my lord," returned Courtenaye; "I know nothing certainly, but I will give you all the information in my power. Four days ago the old friar, Father Aldobrand, came to my tent, and gave me a letter for the Bishop of Leon, at Paris; he did not communicate the contents of the epistle, but at the same time desired me, if I met a person who bore the appearance of a messenger, to stop and examine him. I encountered a man answering that description near Rennes, and after much search discovered this paper. There is, you perceive, no signature, but I was despatched

to the Bishop of Leon, and have therefore no doubt that he is the author of it. The man was to deliver himself and his horse to Sir Louis de Barre."

"Umph!" said Charles. "Then I imagine he must be an accomplice in the murder. I had not supposed his was so false a character: had you any reason for suspecting his truth, Courtenaye?"

"Oh! my lord, I fear me, Sir Louis de Barre is a false knight; and if you trace his history from the commencement of our acquaintance with him, I think you will agree with me, that he is a very likely person to have a hand in this horrible deed. In the first place, he is a renegade from the cause he once espoused; and I feel now but too strongly convinced that the unskilful leech who so nearly deprived us of our chief when you were wounded before Rennes, was a tool of his."

"Ha! say you so?" exclaimed Charles. "Do you really imagine he sought to poison me?"

"I do, my lord; and although at the time I believed him to be a friend, I now look upon him

as a traitor. After this he made an attempt forcibly to carry off the Lady Iola Vandemont, bower-maiden of the Countess of Montfort, and then with fair words tried to lull my suspicions. Now, Lord Charles, I think you will not accuse me of a harsh opinion, when I say that his guilt in this transaction appears perfectly clear and evident."

Charles pondered awhile. "What you say is near akin to proof, I must confess. I marvel what use the wretch intended to make of his wickedness; did he think to gain my favour? And this child, Courtenaye; you said you had no doubt who was the author of the plot, do your suspicions still point at him?"

"Yes," replied the knight: "I think the man who could become an accomplice in the murder of the father, would not long hesitate, if he considered it was for his interest, to seize upon and conceal the son."

"Still," said Charles, "I do not understand what motive he can have for thus ruining the

hopes and destroying the happiness of the Countess of Montfort: it cannot signify very much to him, I should think, whether Montfort or I reign in Brittany. A man does not often feel inclined to burthen his soul with so foul a stain without a powerful reason; and certainly, if his idea be to raise himself in my esteem, he has played a false game; I should not readily take counsel of a murderer."

"Perhaps, my lord, he may imagine yet deeper guilt."

"What say you?" cried Charles.

"Nay," returned Courtenaye, "I say nothing; but I cannot help feeling that the man who would destroy one prince, would not long hesitate in taking the life of another, if he stood in the way of his aggrandizement."

"Horrible!" said Charles shuddering. "I wonder that did not occur to me before. But to return to this child, Reginald, now we have discovered him, we may as well consider what use to make of our information."

"We must keep this affair a profound secret, for the Countess now believes that the child is either dead or irrecoverably lost, and therefore I imagine will easily be persuaded to come to terms, and yield me quiet possession of the duchy. But if she hear he is still in existence, she may be disposed to hold the castle yet longer; and make another struggle for ultimate success."

"Pardon, my liege," replied Courtenaye; "but it strikes me that that would be taking a somewhat unworthy advantage of a mother's feelings. If she surrendered the city, and you then restored the child, methinks you would justly be looked upon with an evil eye by all mankind, and certainly by all her followers; nay, you would do your own cause no small injury."

"She need not be informed how long I have known of his residence in Brittany, and as for that silent-tongued woman, she may be shipped for England."

"The boy, my lord, is not so young but he may tell his own story, and you have every

reason to fear he will publish an account of our visit."

"I wish to heaven," said Charles, "I had maintained my incognito! how could I be such a fool as to show my face!"

"You were more than half suspected before you doffed your casque," said Courtenaye; "that signet-ring, by which you entered so readily, spoke most plainly who you were."

"The old seneschal might have imagined I had lent it some one as a passport; but it is no avail regretting the affair now. What say you, Courtenaye, to my never discovering the child? I could have him carefully educated, and taught all manner of chivalrous exercises? It would be no disappointment to the mother, because she believes him already dead."

"Lord Charles of Blois," exclaimed Courtenaye, in a tone of surprise; "had you a son, you would not argue thus."

The colour rushed to Lord Charles's cheek, and they rode on in silence for a few moments.

The prince soon recovered himself, and turned the conversation to passing objects ; but ere long he again recurred to the all-engrossing topic.

With such like discourse they beguiled the time until they arrived at Ploermel, where they lodged that night. The following morning they again started, hoping to reach their respective destinations before night-fall, but darkness overtook them ere they reached the place where the road forked. Courtenaye felt some misgivings at separating from his lord, but Charles had resolved upon going to Aurai, and Sir Reginald knew the friar must have been long expecting him at Hennebon ; besides, the Lord of Blois was armed, and his person entirely concealed by his harness. The knight therefore bade him farewell, yet he lingered on the spot a moment, debating with himself if he should follow him or not. A little reflection, however, convinced him, that if danger were really to be apprehended, he was himself far more liable to attack than his master ; yet still he did not urge his horse forward.

The moon was just rising—she had entered the second quarter, and threw a cold, pale light on the surrounding objects. Courtenaye saw, or fancied he saw, two figures gliding among the trees of the wood which divided the roads. It was a late hour for travellers at so great a distance from any town or village, and his suspicions were aroused of some foul intention; for since the discovery of Julian's capture, he was more alive to any sinister appearance. He paused to watch their motions, and finding they continued their way after meeting the prince, he went on his. Still he did not feel perfectly satisfied; he soon, therefore, turned his horse, and followed Charles's track.

He had scarcely overtaken him, when a man leaped from a thicket, and seizing upon the Lord of Blois, endeavoured to pull him from off his horse. Charles's armour was a great protection, but Courtenaye feared that the ruffian might insinuate his dagger underneath his gorget ere he could reach him. He made a thrust at Charles's opponent,

but found he was obliged to engage in self-defence, as he was attacked by another villain. One of them crept under the prince's horse, and stabbed him in the stomach; the animal fell and Charles with it. The man got away, but Charles had some difficulty in disengaging himself from the stirrups: Courtenaye aided him by parrying the blows of his antagonist; but one which was aimed at his throat might have been fatal, if Sir Reginald had not received it on his sword. At length he laid the assassin at his feet, and his companion fled.

Charles, panting and exhausted, threw himself upon the turf by the side of the road.

"My lord," said Courtenaye, "I pray you mount behind me, for we must continue our journey, like two Templars, on one horse."

"I will not go to Aurai," said Charles; "I think there is mischief brewing at Hennebon, and thither will I shape my course; but that poor beast will never be able to bear my weight in addition to thine."

"He must," rejoined the knight. "I entreat you not to delay, my lord; that wretch may have only departed to obtain a reinforcement."

Charles consented, and the two knights proceeded without delay to the camp before Hennebon. It was nearly midnight when they arrived there, and they repaired immediately to Courtenaye's tent, for Charles desired his presence should not be made known until the morning. His incognito was still preserved by his armour; the knight, therefore, felt under no apprehension of betraying his guest. Having placed refreshment before the Prince, and seen that he had all he could require, Courtenaye eagerly asked St. Valery if any events had occurred during his absence.

"I do not know what to tell you first," answered Eustace: "Lord Charles has been murdered, and Sir Louis de Barre has taken the command of the forces, by the Lady Jane's desire."

"What!" cried Courtenaye, "Lord Charles murdered! Who says so?"

"Sir Louis," returned the squire: "he received a letter yesterday morning. The whole camp has been in an uproar; the Spaniards threatened to mutiny, but were soon reduced to obedience, and Sir Louis is now become very popular. But, may I ask, noble sir, who is that silent stranger knight who has accompanied you?"

"Thou must restrain that curious spirit of thine, Eustace," said his master; "it will be thy ruin some day. It is not my pleasure to tell thee —But I wish to know what more has happened."

"Why, I have heard it whispered among Sir Louis's people, that he always appeared on such good terms with the princess, it was possible she might one day honour him with her hand."

"Umph!" said Courtenaye;—the silent knight started from his seat. "Do you mean me to understand that Sir Louis de Barre has suddenly acquired so great favour with the people?"

"So much so," returned Eustace, "that I

never saw Lord Charles followed and flattered as he is. But it is early days yet; he has been profuse of solid metal and fair promises."

"It is very extraordinary!" exclaimed Sir Reginald.

"Well now," cried the squire, "I am more surprised at you, noble sir, than even at what has happened: I was almost afraid to tell you, I thought you would be so afflicted; but you appear to be only moved by astonishment."

Courtenaye smiled. "Has De Barre assumed any state?" he asked, without attending to his remark.

"Not much," returned St. Valery: "he is more gracious than ever Prince Charles was, and bids fair to become far more powerful. Now the Earl of Montfort is dead, it is not likely the countess will retain the city much longer, indeed, the only marvel is, she has not yet surrendered."

"How did you hear of the Earl of Montfort's death?"

"I am sure, my lord, I cannot tell you how the report was spread, but it is universally credited."

"Well," said Courtenaye, "you may leave me now, Eustace, for I am not a little fatigued, and shall be glad of rest."

Having parted from the Prince, the knight was indeed too much exhausted to be disturbed by any reflections on De Barre's treason; he slept soundly, but at an early hour he stood by the couch of Charles, to consult with him upon the best measures to be adopted.

After a long debate, whether Charles should show himself openly among the people, or Courtenaye speak in private to De Barre, they resolved upon the former, and that Courtenaye should publicly accuse him of treason, in taking the command of the forces, by attempting to impose on the soldiers an account of the Prince's death.

Charles, attended by Courtenaye, mounted on a noble charger, and clad in a splendid surcoat of purple velvet richly embroidered with silver over

his armour, rode in front of the camp. The astonishment created by this sudden apparition of their lord, who was universally supposed dead, exceeded all powers of description: men could scarcely credit the evidence of their senses; some imagined it to be a fraud, and would not believe it was the Lord of Blois, until he had spoken, and they had examined his countenance.

The confusion occasioned by this event was unspeakable: those who had courted De Barre, in hopes of acquiring his favour, were now as eager to abandon him. The shouts and the tumult soon reached the ears of the tiger knight; he dared not flee, as that would proclaim his guilt, but he sat in moody silence awaiting the result.

Not long was he suffered to remain in ignorance of the transactions around him: a herald proclaimed with a loud voice at each extremity of the camp, that Sir Reginald de Courtenaye accused Sir Louis de Barre of high treason, in having spread a false report of Lord Charles's death, seduced the troops from their allegiance,

and unlawfully taken the command thereof himself. The herald then threw down Sir Reginald's gauntlet, and challenged Sir Louis to answer to the charge, either personally or by a champion, within four days.

He made this appeal twice without receiving any notice ; but the third time, a squire appeared, and, taking up the gage, in his master's name declared Sir Louis de Barre's readiness to do battle with any knight who should dare impeach his honour, and would enter the lists on the day appointed.

De Barre had no sooner made that reply, than he resolved to seek the Lord of Blois, and congratulate him on his restoration to his people, and at the same time prove his innocence of the attempt to forge a report of his death. Accordingly, he repaired to Charles's tent with the letter in his hand, and demanded an audience. This was immediately granted. Courtenaye was in attendance, and the two knights saluted each other haughtily.

"I came, my lord," said he of the tiger to the French prince, "not only to express in person my joy at seeing you once more in the tents at Hennebon, when I thought you sleeping in the grave, but to prove to you that I was as much imposed upon myself as I imposed upon the troops. Is not this the writing of the Lady Jane?" he continued, presenting the letter.

"It is marvellously like it," said Charles, examining it carefully; "nay, I dare be sworn that is Jane's signature. Umph! we must send for our royal consort; methinks she has been somewhat premature in her decisions, and rather too credulous withal. She will be, perchance, rather chagrined at finding her lord still an inhabitant of this lower world."

"Thanks, my lord," replied De Barre. "I know not your lady's autograph, but, if it so please you, I can produce the messenger; and I call all who were present at my proclamation to bear witness if I breathed aught that could hint at disloyalty to the Lady Jane, or be in any respect

detrimental to her cause. You perceive," he continued, "this epistle was not intended for me in the first instance; it was only in Sir Reginald's absence that I presumed to open it. I make this defence to you, Lord Charles of Blois, for your private satisfaction; to other accusers," glancing at Courtenaye, "I shall reply in a different strain." So saying, he left the tent.

The letter staggered Charles a little in his opinion; but Courtenaye felt as firmly convinced as ever of De Barre's guilt, and the paper found on the messenger, confessing the earl's murder, he considered unanswerable; but he refrained from mentioning it, as he was really anxious to measure swords with him, and he thought, moreover, the knight appeared so much on his guard that he would certainly find some means of evading the accusation.

Sir Reginald then made inquiries for the friar, and when he learned how he had been seduced to leave the camp, he became still more confirmed in his opinion of Sir Louis's guilt. It seemed the

holy man had not returned, and the knight feared there had been foul play also in that quarter. However, Jane of Penthievre would shortly make her appearance, and he hoped to hear some account of his venerable friend from her. He requested Charles to send for the Lord Julian, as an additional evidence against Sir Louis, and renewed his entreaties for the child's restoration to the countess. Charles still hesitated; but he promised that, if the young heir were given up, Courtenaye should have the gratification of bearing the intelligence of his safety.

In a few short hours after this, Jane of Penthievre arrived at the camp. Her delight at once again beholding her lord, whom she thought murdered, was so ecstatic, that Charles almost forgave her for the epistle she confessed to having penned.

"I knew you had left Aurai," she said; "and they told me that you had been murdered on your return; that the troops were in a state of mutiny, and that one word from me would restore them

to order. I wrote to Sir Reginald de Courtenay; but they said it was possible he might be absent. I should then have addressed Lord Louis of Spain; but they declared that he was so odious to the army as to have no influence, and I had better write to Sir Louis de Barre; which I did."

"They! who is they?" asked Charles.

"Principally the Bishop of Leon, who has quite abandoned the Countess of Montfort's party."

"Oh, what credulous creatures are women!" said Charles. "There has been an attempt to assassinate me, Jane; but the wretches were foiled."

"Thank God! thank God!" she cried. "You shall never again leave me, I am resolved."

Charles smiled, but he made no promises. "Tell me, Jane," he said, "what became of the friar, when he found I was not at Aurai?"

"I can give you no account of him," replied

the princess. "He left the camp, and has not since been heard of."

"That looks ill," returned her lord. "There is some unseen villain at work. Father Aldobrand must be inquired after."

The day arrived when Courtenaye and De Barre were to meet in single combat. Very early in the morning Lord Julian was brought to the camp. De Barre was thunderstruck at the sight of him, but, concealing his emotion, inquired how they had obtained the prince, and where he had been discovered; saying, that he had heard it reported the child had been kidnapped in England. He could obtain no information, however; for all intercourse between the servitors of the two knights was completely broken off, and no one else knew aught of the affair. The falcon knight again solicited permission to bear to his mother the tidings of the young lord's return, and Jane interfering in his behalf, Charles consented.

Accordingly a herald was despatched to the

gates, demanding a parley with some trusty knight on the part of the Countess of Montfort. Sir Walter Manny answered the summons, supposing Charles had sent to propose terms of peace.

"How is your lady?" were Courtenaye's first words.

"Well in health," returned Manny, "thanks for your courtesy, sir knight, but she has much grief at heart; nevertheless, she talks not of a surrender—at present."

"I marvel at her obstinacy," said Courtenaye: "for whom can she seek to retain the castle, and still aspire to the duchy?"

"I know not," replied Manny; "yet she has resolved upon holding it awhile longer."

"Has she given up all expectation of again seeing her son?" asked Sir Reginald.

"A faint hope still lingers, but it grows less and less, methinks, every day," returned the Breton.

"I come to renew it, sir knight," said Courtenaye. "The Lord Julian has been discovered; nay, more, he is in the French camp."

"What say you, noble sir?" exclaimed Sir Walter. "For God's sake, repeat your words; you have not the air of one who would mock our misery."

"I told not the truth," returned Courtenaye. "He is nearer than I said—he is even now in my train." Saying this, he bade a man-at-arms who followed him on horseback, and who was enveloped in a huge cloak, to doff his mantle; he obeyed, and discovered the young Lord Julian sitting before him. The child screamed for joy when he saw Sir Walter Manny, and loudly entreated they would take him to his mother.

This was a request with which it required much caution to comply, and the knights agreed that Sir Reginald should be introduced to her presence, and communicate the glad tidings with all caution; for she had been so afflicted by his loss, that Sir

Walter feared the effect so sudden a transition from sorrow to happiness might have upon her.

She was sitting at her embroidery, as when Sir Reginald had been first introduced to her. Blanche and Iola were similarly occupied; but the knight and the last-named lady met now with far different feelings than on that day. He was graciously received by all three; but Iola bent her head over the frame, and occupied herself with the greatest diligence at her work, as if her whole mind was engrossed by the flower she was shading.

"Lady," said Sir Reginald, advancing towards the countess, "the last time I stood in your presence, I was a messenger of evil tidings; now I trust I can in some measure dissipate the gloom that overshadows your brow. You have long lamented the Lord Julian as dead, or irrecoverably lost; I trust your fears have been at least partially groundless—he has been discovered."

"Discovered!" exclaimed the three ladies at

once. The countess turned pale; she breathed quickly—

“How? when? where?” she said. “Speak!—tell me instantly!”

“’Tis true indeed,” said Courtenaye. “He was discovered a short time since at a castle some forty leagues from hence, under the care of an Englishwoman: he was in perfect health, and appeared happy.”

“Where is he now, sir knight?” cried the countess. “I pray you let me see him instantly.”

“Nay, lady, gently; the news of his safety seems so to overpower you, I fear you will scarce be able to bear an interview at present.”

“Oh! yes, I entreat, I command, I pray you let him come.”

“You shall be obeyed, madam,” returned the knight. “He is now within the castle.”

At that moment a child’s voice was heard in the gallery, and the next instant Julian was lock-

ed in his mother's arms. She kissed him; she put him from her to examine him more narrowly; she ran her fingers lightly over his forehead and through the glossy curls of his hair, and again embraced her long-lost son. It was some moments before she could be aware of the presence of any one else; but when she had a little recovered herself, "God bless you! sir knight," she said; "keep me no longer in ignorance of your name—let me know to whom I am so deeply indebted."

"To Reginald de Courtenaye, madam," returned the knight. "My first motives for concealment were, that, although formerly known to you, the fortune of war had placed me in opposition to your grace's claims; and I afterwards resolved never to disclose my name until I could flatter myself with reasonable hopes of winning the favour of this fair lady."

Iola blushed; and though the thanks of the countess fell sweetly on his ear, yet his reward was in the full dark eye of the maiden, which,

though turned upon him only for an instant, spoke such deep gratitude, such intense feeling, it would cancel, he thought, a thousand years of pain.

Having performed his devoir, he hurried away, as he knew that the field must be already prepared for the combat, and he dreaded to be thought backward in substantiating his charge against Sir Louis.

Scarcely had the delight and surprise occasioned by Julian's reappearance in some degree subsided, when Blanche, hearing a noise in the court, looked from the window and exclaimed, "Iola! come here; what is this?"

A litter, with a covering thrown over it, placed in a sort of cart, and drawn by one horse, which was guided by a soldier, entered the yard: it was followed by a merchant on horseback and several men-at-arms.

"What can all this mean?" continued she.

Iola looked attentively, but could give her no assistance. "I understand it no better than you," she said. "See, the merchant is dismount-

ing, and they have brought the litter into the hall."

A great tumult and confusion now arose in the castle, and Blanche, who required but a small matter to raise her curiosity, hastily left the room to inquire into the cause of the mystery. She met the merchant in the gallery; but he stopped not to answer her questions, pushed rudely past her, and entered the apartment she had just left.

"Jane!" he exclaimed, looking wildly round him; and, without heeding or noticing any one else, he rushed towards the countess and clasped her to his breast. She started, screamed, and fell fainting on his shoulder.

"Oh!" cried the Earl of Montfort, (for it was he,) "what have I done? I have killed her! Oh! Jane, my own loved countess, speak, I conjure you!"

By the aid of stimulants she was soon restored to her senses, and looking at him as if she feared she had been deceived, she threw her arms about his neck and burst into tears. Iola held her

breath ; she could not speak, for joy and astonishment.

At this moment the fool came tumbling into the room.

“ ‘ That shall be found which has been lost—
But one must weep who erst laugh’d most.’ ”

“ Oooh ! ” said he, shaking his head.

“ Lalala ! ” said the earl ; “ how art thou, my old friend ?—My boy !—Iola too !—But where is the poor little Blanche ? ”

“ She left the room as you entered it, my lord,” replied Iola.

“ Alas ! ” said the earl : “ go to her, maiden.”

All in amazement, she quickly descended the stairs to seek for her companion : she found the hall full of people, but descriing Sir Godfrey de Reyneval among the group, hastened towards him, and asked if he knew where Blanche was. Just then a piercing shriek burst from some one near her, and Blanche, with hair dishevelled and disordered dress, rushed past her.

"Let me see him ! let me see him !" she cried, breaking from the women who tried to detain her ; and, totally regardless of the crowd, she threw herself upon the litter :—" Let me die with him !"

" Sweet, you must not stay," said Sir Godfrey ; and taking her in his arms, he forcibly carried her from the spot.

" Tell me who it is ?" asked Iola fearfully, for she dreaded the answer.

" Sir Amauri de Clisson," murmured an old man, " God rest his soul !"

" Is he dead ?" cried Iola.

" Yes indeed, lady : it seems he was killed through a mistake ; but, mistake or not, he is stark and stiff now."

" Poor, poor Blanche !" said she, and followed her companion, the tears streaming down her cheeks, and her heart torn by conflicting emotions. Sir Godfrey had conveyed the youthful mourner to her chamber, where Iola found her in a state of distraction. She would listen to no consolation, but talked incessantly of her bold,

her faithful Clisson. She was sure he did not know how truly she had loved him, or he never would have left her. Why did the villain murder him?—it was the Earl of Montfort they wanted. She walked about the room, calling on him to come to her; then, as if he were present, entreated him to forgive her indiscretions; and vowed she would never chide or look coldly upon him again, if he would but return. At length, exhausted by the violence of her grief, she sank upon a couch and fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife ;
To all the grovelling world proclaim—
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.

ANON.

COURTENAYE, little dreaming of the rank of the supposed merchant, had passed the procession in the court, and hastily returned to the French camp to prepare for his encounter with De Barre.

These and similar scenes have been so often and so powerfully described, that it would be presumptuous, as well as unnecessary, to attempt a particular account. All the troops in the neighbourhood were assembled, the lists were

enclosed, and Charles and his consort appeared, and took their seats under a magnificent canopy to witness the combat. A tent was erected at each end of the field for the accommodation of the hostile knights, and their shields were hung before the respective entrances. Their arms and accoutrements having been examined, they retired to don their harness.

At length the soul-inspiring call of the heralds, "Come forth, knights!" resounded from side to side. Sir Reginald advanced, armed at all points, followed by two squires, and preceded by another herald, who proclaimed Sir Louis de Barre a most foul traitor and a murderer, and bade him, if he could, answer the charge. The knight rode up and touched his opponent's shield with the point of his lance, and then retired somewhat beyond the centre of the field.

Sir Louis de Barre, similarly equipped, hesitated not to meet him. They were both known to be brave and accomplished warriors; and although by far the greater number of dames and

damsels earnestly prayed for success upon Courtenaye's arms, yet, in proportion to their wishes, the fears of these fair ladies were excited by the tall and stalwart figure of the tiger knight, and the apprehension of the power he might acquire from despair. The combatants eyed each other with looks of mortal hate, and reined up their impatient chargers, until the eagerly expected word was pronounced by the heralds, "*Laissez aller !*"

A slight confusion had been observed among the spectators, which drew some attention to the spot; and almost at the instant when the knights dressed their spears to the rests, preparatory to dashing forward on each other, Father Aldobrand, whom many supposed murdered, rushed fearlessly in between them.

"Hold !" he cried—"Hold your hands, I command ye both !"

They simultaneously halted, and almost threw their horses on their haunches.

"Fall back!" exclaimed De Barre; "by what authority do you interrupt the course?"

"By the authority of a father!" returned the friar. "Desist instantly, Courtenaye! put by that lance; thou shalt not shed thy brother's blood!"

"My brother!" cried Courtenaye; "what mean you?"

"The friar is demented," said De Barre: "keep him off."

"Nay," said the Franciscan, "alas! I still retain my senses: would to God all I have seen and known within the last few months had been a delusion!"

The uproar occasioned by this sudden apparition reached the pavilion of Charles and Jane, and the former eagerly demanded the cause of the tumult.

"It is occasioned by Father Aldobrand," answered one near him; "he must be mad, for he has forcibly entered the lists."

“ Let him be secured until the fight is over,” said Charles; “ I will have no more delays.”

A valet was sent to desire a herald to proclaim the renewing, or rather the commencement of the combat, and to seize upon the friar. Ere they could bind him, he turned again to De Barre.

“ Louis de Roubigny !” he said, “ hear and obey the commands of thy supposed murdered parent !—Once more I say, hold thy hand !”

De Barre’s complexion assumed a livid hue; his jaw fell; his eyes became blood-shot, and almost started from their sockets; he reeled in his saddle, and would have fallen but for the piques which rose high before and behind. Courtenaye was struck speechless.

The friar looked at him. “ He is thy brother.—Lead me to the prince, and all shall be made known: too long, Courtenaye, hast thou remained ignorant of thy birth.”

Father Aldobrand then approached the royal

tent ; Sir Reginald followed him, but De Barre stirred not.

“ Nay,” said the friar, “ you must both dismount and accompany me ; my guilt and thine, Louis, shall be discovered to all.”

Charles, although at first displeased that his commands were disobeyed, soon forgot his anger in his curiosity to learn the cause of this violent interference.

“ Most noble prince,” said the friar, “ I am—or, more properly, I was—Albert Earl of Rou-bigny. This knight,” pointing to De Barre, “ was my only, my much-loved son. His mother, for I will not spare myself, died from harsh treatment and neglect when he was yet a boy. I then espoused the lovely, the angelic Matilda de Vaux ; she died ere I had called her mine twelve months, and the child, whose birth had cost her her life, and whom I declared I would never see, I was credibly informed had soon afterwards breathed his last.

“ My only remaining son I spoiled from over-indulgence ; and his temper, formed in the same mould as mine, could not brook contradiction. We had, one evening, a dreadful quarrel, of which, in justice to him, I must confess I was the origin. From words we came to blows ; the struggle was violent, and the youth left me, his father, for dead. Dreading discovery, he fled his ancient halls, and changed his name. The old seneschal found me in a state of insensibility ; but through his unremitting care and attention I was restored to life, though not to content. Thus were my sins and iniquities visited on my own head.

“ Life having no pleasures left for me, I only prayed for time to prove my sincere repentance. I became a brother of the order of St. Francis, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and after wandering through various countries, I arrived at Rennes a few months ago.

“ One day I was called in to shrive a poor woman, wife of an innkeeper between Rennes

and Nantes ; and, to my astonishment—whether joy or horror, I can scarcely say—she told me she had been the nurse of my second son ; that, knowing my vindictive disposition, she had concealed him from me, and shortly after conveyed him to the house of his maternal uncle, Sir William de Courtenaye, by whom he was educated as his heir. It chanced that this long-lost son was in the hostelry at the time the publican's wife made her confession ; but I knew him not, and we did not again meet until some weeks afterwards, when I accidentally recognised him in the camp at Hennebon as my acquaintance of the inn ; but I was still ignorant of his relationship to me. He requested me to use all my skill for your recovery, my lord, and on entering your tent, I heard the Lady Jane address him by the name of Courtenaye. This revealed the mystery.

“ From that time I have been unable to tear myself from him ; but I had not the courage to inform him of the truth, and even now this

dreadful secret would not have been wrung from me if I had not seen the children of one father raise their hands to take each other's life. This, my lord, is my tale."

The friar crossed his arms upon his breast, and bowed his head. The silence with which his story had been listened to remained unbroken for some moments; when Courtenaye, regardless of the by-standers, threw himself on the ground and clasped his knees, exclaiming, "My father!"

De Barre gazed fiercely round him. "Ha! ha! ha!" he cried, bursting into a fearful laugh, while the blood started from his nostrils, and his eyes glared and flashed—"Ha! ha! so I killed thee not, old man?" Every one looked at him with horror. "I care not for ye now, royal Charles: though I did murder the Earl of Montfort, you will not be Duke of Brittany, thanks to your own wisdom in restoring the young Lord Julian.—Ha! ha!"

"Stop!" said the friar, "the Earl of Montfort lives—no thanks to thee, however, or to thy

base accomplice. In the hurried journey made by him and his companion, they accidentally changed places, and the murderer's knife was plunged into the neck of Sir Amauri de Clisson."

"Help! help!" cried De Barre; and, grasping the arm of a knight who stood near him, "I am dying!" he exclaimed.

At this moment a large dog burst into the company, and leaped upon him.

"Guymon!" he said, and, forgetful of his sufferings, the same tender expression we have before noticed passed over his features—"I would not live to be pointed at: this small phial," taking an empty one from his vest, "has long been my companion; it is a sovereign remedy for all ills. Courtenaye, this hound is all that ever really loved me—all that I care for now; tell the dark-eyed maiden to watch and tend it, as she regards the entreaties of a dying man."

"I promise to fulfil your request," said Courtenaye.

The friar advanced towards him, and attempted to take his hand ; but he set his teeth and repulsed him. He stared wildly around him ; a fearful struggle distorted his features ; he groaned horribly, and expired, while an expression of the bitterest scorn played on his lips.

The friar, although his feelings were somewhat less acute than formerly, and his passions had long been schooled, could not control them now ; the voice of nature would be heard ; he threw himself on the corpse, and burst into tears. Jane of Penthievre fainted, and was carried out by her women. Charles looked as though he could not yet comprehend the affair ; Courtenaye stooped and bent over his now fallen foe, to ascertain if life were already quite extinct.

While all were still occupied in contemplating this frightful spectacle, a loud flourish of trumpets proclaimed a herald from the city. He approached the royal tent, and demanded instant audience of Charles, in the name of the Countess

de Montfort, who had sent to propose a truce, and which was accompanied by a message, craving the presence of Charles and his friends at a banquet to be holden the following day, when she would acknowledge in person her deep gratitude to them for the restoration of her son.

Charles, without knowing what he did or said, instantly assented to a cessation of arms, and courteously accepted the invitation. By degrees, order was restored in the camp; but each knight retired with feelings very different from those with which he had quitted it in the morning.

Charles, with that versatility of disposition for which he was but too remarkable, in order to dissipate the gloom which weighed upon his spirits, sent for Alice Macauley, and once again desired she would relate the history of her guilt.

"I was bound to silence and secrecy," answered the dame; "but he is dead now, and it cannot harm him. I am a plain woman, Lord Charles, and if you must hear the tale, I may not gainsay you.

“ I was domestic of Lady Matilda Jerningham, who lives in Holborn, in the city of London: she is an intrigante, and knows more of the secret history of courts perhaps than any one living. Sir Louis de Barre—or Sir Louis de Roubigny, as they tell me he ought to have been called—promised her vast riches if she could obtain the person of the young De Montfort, who was then in London with Sir Amauri de Clisson. I had lived long with her, and had assisted her in many a difficulty.

“ I stole the child from Smithfield, whither he had gone to witness some shows, and conveyed him on board a collier, the ‘ Sea-flower’ by name. We did not intend to send him to the North, but thought that might serve as a blind. We were carried down the river in that ship, and then put on board the ‘ Jane of Dunkirk,’ in which vessel we were to have crossed the Channel; but hearing there was a vigorous search commenced, I dreaded discovery, and resolved upon conveying my young charge to my lady’s house in Holborn, remaining

there concealed until the excitement should have in some measure subsided. Before I left home, my lady had given me a sign and countersign, 'Sea-flower' and 'Jane,' in case she should send any one to inquire after the boy, which I communicated to Boymans, the waterman employed. The child and I had been some hours hidden in the cellar, when Boymans arrived in a dreadful fright; a knight had inquired for the prince, he said, and although he did not give the word, he displayed a silver crucifix, which Boymans knew belonged to me, and which he thought I must have given instead. How the knight obtained it I know not, for I have scarcely ever parted from it. I heard afterwards that the knight came to Ely-place and made all inquiries, but my lady baffled him.

"We remained there for two days, no one knowing of our concealment but my mistress, and then we were shipped for Brittany. I was ordered to convey my young master to an old ruined castle, called the Château de Roubigny, near Rennes, where I should find every accommoda-

tion, but not on any account to disclose the name or rank of my prisoner. The seneschal was informed that a child and his nurse would arrive there ; that it was a son of the Earl, whom he wished to keep concealed. How much longer we might have remained there I know not, if that knight" (pointing to Courtenaye) "had not discovered us."

"Umph !" said Charles, "it is a marvellous history, and we may rejoice that it has ended so well : but a stop must be put to Lady Jerningham's intrigues. The Earl of Montfort, doubtless, will inform King Edward of her dangerous disposition. I will not reward thy iniquity as it deserves ; but thou must be sent to the Countess of Montfort, that she may deal with thee according to her pleasure."

Alice fell on her knees, and implored forgiveness.

"Ask not pardon of me," returned Charles : "thou hast not injured me : ask it of her whose child thou so foully kidnapped."

“ For the love of Heaven, have mercy on me, my lord ! Speak for me, sweet sir ! ” she continued, turning to Courtenaye with a beseeching look.

“ I have small fears for thee,” replied Sir Reginald ; “ thou mayest trust to the lady’s clemency.”

The friar shut himself up for the remainder of that day, and refused even to see Courtenaye, who claimed the privilege of a son to be admitted.

On the following day, Charles, accompanied by his princess, Lord Louis of Spain, and many noble barons and knights, repaired to the gates of Hennebion, and entered the castle amid the rejoicings and shouts of the multitude, and the loud harmony of martial music. The countess, overcome with gratitude to heaven for the restoration of her husband and her son, and to the Lord Charles and Courtenaye as the immediate instruments thereof, received her guests with a pleasure, which was only clouded by the recollection of the death of Clisson.

Ere the banquet commenced, Courtenaye found himself by the side of Iola, and had pleaded his cause with her. Not now did he woo her as the nameless knight of the falcon, but as heir to the earldom of Roubigny, and all its broad lands.

“Your wealth and power,” replied Iola to his suit, “would have had no influence with me; I had vowed never to give my hand to the enemy of De Montfort: — but he can scarcely be deemed such,” she added in a faltering voice, “who has restored our prince to his mother’s arms.”

At that moment a flourish of trumpets announced the banquet; the knight clasped her hand, carried it to his lips, and conducted her to the hall as his affianced bride.

While still seated at the board, the fool Lalala tumbled into the hall, singing the doggrel rhymes contained in the letter which had been concealed under the pigeon’s wing.

“Some walk, some fly,
Some sleep, some die,—
The tower stood, but stands no longer,
Yet the oak shall still shoot stronger.

When the bird shall meet the beast,
When the dead shall join the feast,
That shall be found which hath been lost,—
Yet one must weep, who erst laugh'd most.

“And is it not all true?” he said.

“Alas!” said the countess, “I little dreamed that Clisson was the tower which had fallen, and that Blanche was she who must weep. But, tell me, Lalala, was it you who despatched the messenger?”

“It was I,” said a voice at the lower end of the hall. Every one turned towards the spot whence it proceeded.

“Lady of Montfort,” said the friar, “I knew your lord was safe, and that the child was found, and therefore bade you delay the surrender. My ally, Lalala, has, I perceive, been faithful.—Reginald de Courtenaye,” he continued, “I here proclaim thee, before this goodly company, Earl of Roubigny: be a loyal baron and a true.” Without waiting for a reply, he glided out of the hall.

We have now little more to relate. A truce

of three years was agreed upon between the contending parties. The Earl and Countess of Montfort, taking advantage of the suspension of arms, passed over with their young son to England, and remained some time at the court of London. In a few short weeks, Iola was saluted Countess of Roubigny; and St. Valery had ample time and opportunity for exploring the mazes of the old castle. The friar would not consent to reside with his son—the chateau was connected with too many painful scenes; but he continued his expiatory life of usefulness.

Lalala parted from his mistress with many tears; but he could not summon courage to tempt the seas. He became reconciled, however, to her absence, and was a great acquisition to the followers and retainers of the new Earl of Roubigny.

The Bishop of Leon, his plots and schemes being discovered, fled beyond sea, and was never heard of more.

All Blanche's hopes in this world were blighted; careless and light-hearted in prosperity and while

fortune smiled upon her, this last severe blow crushed her to the earth ;

“ And though ere long her sanguine spirit rose
Above the first dread pressure of its woes —
Though health and bloom return'd — the delicate chain
Of thought, once tangled, never clear'd again ;
A wandering bark, upon whose pathway shone
All stars of heaven, except the guiding one.”

Iola used all the arts suggested by the tenderest friendship to soften the rigour of her destiny, and persuaded her to make Roubigny her home. She seldom wept, but she glided about, like a spirit from above, and would sing to her lute for hours, verses, of which the exploits of Clisson were the theme ; or address him with exhortations to throw off his melancholy and be himself again : and if the cold light of reason shot through her mind, she would cast her lute from her, and, bowing her head on her breast, remain speechless, until memory having yielded to imagination, her song once more shed a faint ray of pleasure over her soul.

THE END.

BERTHA OF BURGUNDY.

BERTHA OF BURGUNDY.

INTRODUCTION.

It was but by degrees that the empire founded and established by the mighty Charlemagne could relapse into the state of anarchy and misery from which it was, for a season, rescued by that master-spirit of the West. Had he bequeathed to his son a power and energy of mind at all proportioned to the extent of dominion committed to the government of his feeble hand, the decline of the empire might have been still more gradual ; but Louis le Débonnaire, though perhaps undeserving the censure generally thrown upon his character, was ill fitted to uphold the glory of the empire, which had been raised only by his

immediate predecessors from a state of insignificance. His reign was an incessant scene of contention ; partly from the rebellious spirit of his sons, ever quarrelling about the division of the empire ; partly from his disputes with the clergy ; whose enmity he incurred from his efforts to check their growing licentiousness. The empire, at his death divided among his sons, was again united in the person of his grandson, Charles le Chauve ; after whose death, the dismemberment of the empire, and a rapid succession of insignificant princes, occupy a century of confusion and crime, over which history would gladly pass in silence, but that its influence was too long and too deeply felt. Dreadful was the state of the people during this period, when the nobles, unrestrained by the spirit of Charlemagne, each played the tyrant in his own petty dominion ; and unsparing was the grasp by which their poor vassals were robbed of their small patrimonies and hardly-earned privileges. But greater still were the evils which

desolated the kingdom from without. The Normans, or North-men, no longer fearing the vigorous resistance they had met with in the days of Charlemagne, again descended upon the coasts of France, and finally penetrated into the centre of the kingdom, rendering themselves masters of the most important places, and despoiling the monasteries and churches of all that had ever been held sacred or precious. It must have been a powerful country which could have resisted the dreadful incursions of these northern barbarians, who rushed upon their prey with an impetuosity which overwhelmed everything in its course ; and the enfeebled state of France at that period, rendered it an easy victim to these scourges of the age. At last, Charles le Simple ceded the large province which has since gone by their name. The Normans became Christians and Frenchmen, and by their colonization strengthened the country they had so lately ravaged and despoiled.

Such was the state of France upon the accession

of Hugues Capet. There is generally a point in the history of anarchy at which some daring spirit rises to take the helm of affairs ; such a spirit as is only roused when the storm is at its height, and such as perhaps could only be formed by the jar of the elements amidst which it rises. Such a spirit was Hugues Capet, of the house of Burgundy, which had been gradually gathering strength and consequence amid the ruin and desolation which surrounded it. By degrees the dominion of the kings of France had dwindled into little more than the possession of the city of Laon : but the acquisition to the crown, of Burgundy, Paris, Orleans, Touraine, Anjou, and Le Maine, the possessions of Hugues Capet, rendered it sufficiently important to maintain some degree of ascendancy over its powerful barons. One only competitor seems to have been bold enough to dispute with Hugues Capet the succession to the throne—Charles of Lorraine. He, however, was taken prisoner, and soon after died in confinement ; and Hugues, no longer fearing

any rival, associated in the government his son Robert, whose virtues and talents justly fitted him for that high employ. It was during the absence of Hugues and Robert, on their expedition against the Duke of Lorraine, that the following conversation took place in the palace of Hugues.

CHAPTER I.

"How weary I am of embroidering all day!" said the lively Gisèle, looking up from the frame on which her eyes and fingers had been busily employed for some hours. "Bertha! pr'ythee lay aside thy work, and join me in some lively pastime; my head is well nigh bewildered with bending over these grim knights and doleful maidens."

"If you seek to dissipate your gloom in the countenances of your companions, Gisèle," said the Princess Hedwidge, "I fear me you'll be disappointed; for a more dolorous set of maidens, sure, never looked down from a tapestried wall. Since our father and Robert departed, I have rarely seen a smile among you."

"Oh, that this turbulent duke were fairly quelled!" said the gentle Alice. "I like not to think upon the dangers to which my father is exposed by his presumption and folly, while we are lazily sitting, sorting gold and azure threads."

"But why are we sorting threads?" said Hedwidge, as the spirit of her father shone in her eye; "whilst our country and our father's throne is threatened, why are we pent within these battlements?" Then laughing at her own warmth, she added, "What say you to an expedition of knight-errantry? Should I find a squire among you, maidens?"

"Dare you ask that question of the daughters of Hugues?" said Giséle; "and yet, forsooth, I know not how Alice would face the roar of battle. Did you mark, when in pastime the other day, we watched Robert and his companions skirmishing, as they became more earnest in the contest, and their eyes flashed brighter, and the blows fell quicker—did you mark how she trembled—

and her cheek was now white as my kerchief, and now crimson as her bodice?"

"Or as her brow," rejoined Hedwidge, laughing; while Alice suddenly resumed her work, to hide her blushing face. "Saw you not Nevers was in the fight?"

"But, hark! was not that a horn?" exclaimed all, as a distant sound was just now heard. "And now it is answered by the warder: it is news from Laon; it is the note of welcome that he sounds. Come, come to this casement; who is it? see."

"I see but one horseman in the distance," said Gisèle.

"Who can it be?" said Hedwidge. "See how hard he rides! he has passed the drawbridge already."

"Pray Heaven he bring us no bad tidings," said Alice, fearfully.

"That cannot be, for 'tis the prince your brother," said Bertha, joy lighting up her eye, and diffusing itself over her lovely and speaking

countenance, whose usual pensive expression rendered these moments of joy more brilliant. They were not frequent; her early misfortunes had imparted to her character a tinge of sadness unusual at her age, for she was now only in her seventeenth year. On the death of her father,—which had occurred some years before this period, but not before her heart and deeply sensitive feelings were sufficiently matured for her to feel in a very painful degree the desolation and dependance of her situation,—she was received into the family of Hugues Capet, her cousin, (or, as some say, her uncle,) to be brought up with his daughters, who were about the age of the orphan Bertha.

Hugues, though possessing strong feelings of affection, was in his family, as in his camp, imperious and haughty—stern in enforcing his commands, and inflexible in his resolution. His eldest daughter, Hedwidge, inherited in a high degree these qualities of her father, and between them it might have fared ill with Bertha, but for

the strong interest which her beauty, her situation, and the sweetness of her disposition, excited in the hearts of all around her. Repulsed by the haughty spirit of their eldest sister, and the rigour with which she sometimes exercised over them the *droit d'aînée*, her younger cousins found in Bertha a friend and companion, whose strong good sense and firmness could now support in her little difficulties the timid and shrinking Alice, and now assist with her intelligence and sweetness the undertakings of the lively Gisèle. But her beauty, her intelligence, and her sweetness, were not her only champions:—in the love of her cousin Robert, the only son of Hugues, his delight and pride, the idol of his large and powerful fief, she possessed a champion more puissant than all the rest united. Had this strong feeling been one of late growth, it must have excited the disapprobation of the stern Hugues; but it had watched over Bertha's interest in their childish pastimes, had grown with their growth and strengthened with their strength, so imperceptibly, that while one was

verging upon womanhood, and the form of the other had already attained its full height and manly symmetry, their love was unregarded by those around them, or ascribed only to the circumstances which had made her one of his father's household; and they themselves were perhaps ignorant of the full extent of the affection, which had so gradually, but so firmly, taken root in their hearts, till circumstances made it known, to the misery of both.—But, ere this, the prince has passed the casement, has dismounted at the doorway, and is now gladly welcomed in his sister's tower.

“How fares our royal father? and how goes on the war?—why are you thus returned alone, and in such haste?” burst from the lips of each of the princesses, as they hung around the princely form of their brother.

“Because I would not that ye heard from other lips of the success of our arms, and the defeat of the rebel Charles,” replied he, as he addressed his speech to the group; but his eye

sought that of Bertha, and shone with redoubled brilliancy at the joy which sparkled in hers. But he was soon called from the contemplation of it, by the glad and eager vociferations of his sisters.

"Is he defeated? is he taken? is he killed? and are the rebels quelled?"

"They are:—he is our prisoner. But, maidens, my lord our father will be here anon. He bade me tell you, that this night he holds a court, to celebrate our victory over this, the only troubler of his peace, and to assign such rewards to those whose valour has effected it. He bids you all be present to grace the assembly; and make all preparation speedily, as he comes with haste to greet you."

"That will we joyfully," said Hedwidge; and summoning her attendants, she gave the necessary orders, while Gisèle ran delighted to her tiring-room: but Bertha lingered, as she folded the scarf she had been engaged in working; and Alice hung yet on her brother's arm, and coaxed him

to disclose the names of those whose valour had distinguished them.

"It may not be—I will not tell thee, girl! Thou wilt know to-night."

"Forsooth, I will not wait so long." Come, tell me, did the Count de Blois fight well?"

"Truly did he; but there was one beside him whose valour shamed many."

"Whom mean you?" said the breathless Alice, expecting to hear the well-known name of the young Count de Nevers.

"The old Count d'Arcy," replied her brother, smiling at her evident disappointment.

"Pshaw, boy! think you I care to hear of his feats? they were the first tales my nurse told me."

"Hark! there is the warder's horn again," said Hedwige; "he sees them doubtless from afar. Bertha, come!" and Alice joined them as they left the apartment.

CHAPTER II.

THE guests had already assembled in the lofty and spacious hall, which had been hastily prepared for their reception; at one end of which, upon a platform raised some degrees above the floor, was placed a chair of state, covered with crimson cloth, under a canopy of the same material. Large iron lamps, in the rude fashion of the age, lighted up the vaulted and exquisitely fretted roof from which they hung; and huge torches, placed in niches round the wall, flung a red and glaring light upon the groups into which the warriors had formed, while they ever and anon turned an expectant eye towards the platform. They were mostly armed, for they had been hastily summoned on their return from their

victorious expedition; and their rude and dingy armour contrasted well with the flush and excitement of victory which still dwelt upon their countenances. But it was not unmixed with apprehension in the features of some of the younger knights, whose valour had now first made them candidates for fame; and the hearts of some beat thick, as they awaited the arrival of their sovereign, to hear how far their youthful *prouesse* should raise them on the ladder of promotion.

“I congratulate thee, Nevers,” said the Count de Blois, as he shook the gauntleted hand of his young friend and companion in arms: “I have watched thee through the day, and, by my troth, thy young valour might make veterans blush. It has raised thee nearer to thine Alice than could a dukedom; for well Hugues knows how to reward those whose bravery has made his throne secure.”

“It is that security, De Blois, for which this morning I did fight so hardly, which now bids

sink the hope that spurred me on. The mind of Charles of Lorraine did not discourage my pretensions to the hand of his lovely daughter; but I fear me, the monarch of this fair realm—the founder, as he will doubtless be, of a new and powerful line of kings—may spurn the young and rash aspirant to so brilliant an alliance.”

“Tush, boy! let not thy fears dishearten thee: would that my claim to Bertha’s hand were half as good as thine to Alice’s! In the friendship of her brother thou hast an able pleader for thy suit, which I cannot boast; for, though I know not why, it is clear he loves me not. But, see! they come!”

“Oh, it is a goodly train!” said one of the assembly, as they pressed forward to pay their homage to their king.

Firm was the step of Hugues Capet that night, as he advanced to the throne which the late victory over his only, but powerful rival, the Duke of Lorraine, had secured to him beyond all fear of competition. He saw himself the possessor of

the fairest realm of Christendom—the founder of a dynasty whose name, in centuries to come, should hold a first station among the princes of Europe. Proud was his glance upon his only son, who should uphold the glory he would leave him, and upon the lovely maidens, who shrunk half-fearfully from the gaze of the eager and admiring assembly.

In figure and in countenance Hugues looked the monarch. A circlet of gold bound his brow, on which sat an expression of pleased and unwanted good-humour. He had exchanged his armour for a purple tunic, which showed off to great advantage his well-proportioned figure, whose strength and manliness contrasted well with the elegant and shrinking form of Alice, who leaned upon his arm, arrayed in a simple robe of white, scarce daring to throw back the fair and luxuriant ringlets which shaded her delicate features and light blue eyes, and fell upon her alabaster neck and rounded shoulders. Upon the other side of Hugues entered Hedwidge,

whose finely-formed but somewhat unmasculine features, lofty brow, piercing eye, and imposing mien, showed the spirit of her father reflected in her. She wore a crimson robe, and her hair was plaited in the form of a diadem, which well became her, as she took her station proudly by her father's throne. Bertha and Gisele completed the group which formed around the monarch; for Robert, after placing them by his father, had left them, to join the warriors below. The attendants ranged themselves at some little distance behind their prince's chair. A flourish of trumpets announced to the assembly that the king was about to address them, and they eagerly pressed forward, while he thanked them for their vigorous and prompt assistance in the late emergency, and complimented them upon their bravery and valour in the contest with the rebel Charles, whose fate they would discuss upon some future opportunity; for such a subject was not meet for so joyful an occasion as the present, when he had assembled his noble and right-trusty friends, to

bid them ask of him such boons, or accept such favours, as he in conscience could grant. "And first, my friends," he added, "I would have you name a meet reward for him who, in taking prisoner, and placing in our power this rebellious duke, has accomplished the great end of our enterprise."

"It was the prince his son—it was the brave young prince," resounded through the hall.

"It was my son," replied the king, a tear of proud affection gathering as he spoke: "his reward is at your disposal." None, however, named it, though the murmur of admiration and enthusiasm which pervaded the hall showed that it was not withheld by the disapprobation of the assembly.

"Since it is left to me to name my son's reward," said the king, "tell me, my friends, shall I err in following the example of my predecessors on this throne—shall I err in sharing it with him who has rendered it secure to me?"

Loud and continued shouts of applause evinced the approbation and delight of the assembly at

this proposal, and the prince was abruptly called by it from the remotest corner of the hall, into which he had retreated upon the first mention of his exploits, to receive from his father the reward of his youthful valour. A way was eagerly made for him, as he passed through the hall; and many were the blessings from the old, and congratulations from the young, which greeted him as he advanced to the platform, where his father meeting him, extended his hand to him, and placed him on the throne beside him. Long and deafening shouts of "Long live Hagues and Robert!" for many minutes filled the hall.

His sisters crowded round him to express their joy at the new honours conferred on him, and for a moment Robert felt nothing but the consciousness of his high dignity and popularity. But long ere the shouts had subsided, he felt that his cup might yet be fuller, for Bertha's voice had not joined in the general song of congratulation and enthusiasm. But scarce was the feeling born, when he felt a warm tear fall upon the hand he had ex-

tended upon the back of the throne, and turning round, he beheld Bertha standing somewhat behind it, her whole soul and feeling concentrated in the intense look with which she regarded him. Her full dark eyes scarce equalled in brilliancy by the rich circlet of diamonds which surmounted her fair brow, she seemed to live for that one ardent gaze which now engrossed her soul. That gaze sufficed, and as he seized and pressed to his lips the fair hand of Bertha, Robert felt, that unless possessed of it, the empire of the world would be as nothing to him.

But he was roused from these reflections by the ceremony of receiving the homage of his new subjects; and it was not till the first proud baron bent the knee to Robert, that the sickening consciousness of her new and different relation to him swept like a withering blast over the young, fond heart of Bertha. "It was but this morning," thought she, "that I loved my playmate in childhood, my companion in youth: whom do I love now? My king—a monarch whose alliance will be

courted by the first princes of the age, while an orphan daughter of Burgundy must bend the knee before him. Is it then a crime to love him? If so, I must for ever be most guilty."

"Oh, Bertha, see!" cried Gisèle, "the young knight De Ponthieu advances! I trust our father will reward him well—he looks so bold and dauntless."

"Sire de Ponthieu," said the king, "thy valour claims this kingdom's thanks—but they were poor fare to live upon. Take with them the lands of Boguevallois, and be ever as ready in thy country's cause as thou hast proved thyself this day."

"My valiant and right-trusty friend," said Hugues, as the old Count d'Arcy approached, "how can I thank thee for thine old and valued services—how can I prove to thee my gratitude? Lands and riches thou lackest not—thou must name thy boon."

"My lord the king," said the old veteran,

“ it is true I have long fought in the service of my country, and I trust that in this my last exploit I have not shamed the reputation of my youth. But I now see your throne surrounded and supported by those whose strength is yet un-enfeebled by age, and whose courage is undamped by the reverses of this turbulent world. To them it behoves me to give place. In them, sire, you will find stronger arms and stouter hearts, but not a more loyal one, than in old d’Arcy. With your grace’s leave, I would now spend in retirement and peace the few remaining years of my life : but I will first crave my boon. It is, that the king, your son, will place about his person my only and orphan grandchild. He will serve him well ; and in leaving him under the protection of a prince I reverse so highly, I shall be without one earthly care.”

“ All that you could be to him I will be,” said Robert ; “ and I thank you, d’Arcy, that you have made the first act of my power one of gra-

titude and respect to a loved and honoured friend."

"We will cherish him as thy child, d'Arcy," said Hugues; "and if he but inherit thy valour and thy worth, he will be a bulwark to our throne."

The old count bowed profoundly. "And now, sire, I would wish you farewell," said he with much emotion; and after respectfully kissing the hand which Hugues extended to him, he took an affectionate leave of Robert and the princesses, whom he had known and loved from childhood, disappeared among the crowd, and was seen no more at court.

"And now approach, Nevers," said the king. "What, boy! thou comest timidly, dost thou? It was not thus that I did see thee charge yestreen the bold spearmen of Lorraine. By my troth, I thought thy headlong valour would undo us; but as it did not happen so this time, I will guard against the like again, by giving thee, with the hand of the timid Alice, so high a value for

thy life as shall temper even thy hot spirit. Come hither, Alice ! What ! frightened still, thou foolish trembler !” Then, placing in the hand of the enraptured Nevers that of his lovely child, he added, “Thou dost well deserve her, else thou hadst not had her, boy.—But who comes next ? Ha ! it is thee, De Blois ? I have of late marked with sorrow that thou and Robert have not been the friends I wish to see thee. Robert, give him thy hand ; I will have no strife between ye ; and in token of reconciliation, De Blois, he shall himself bestow on thee the hand of the Princess of Burgundy. I know thou hast long loved her, and thy services claim from us this reward. — How now ! dost not hear me, Robert ?” But Robert sat as one spell-bound, apparently insensible to all around him.

A cloud darkened the countenance of Hugues as the truth flashed upon his mind, and a thousand suspicions, which formerly had arisen but to die away, now rose in strong attestation of it ; but the conviction of the truth only served to

strengthen the stern intention of the king. He had not marked without anxiety the turbulent and martial spirit of De Blois, one of the richest and most powerful of his barons, and had long intended to attach to his person, by this alliance, one whose ambition, influence, and undaunted bravery would, if thwarted, have rendered him no insignificant enemy.

“Thou shalt receive her, then, from me, De Blois!” he said. “Hedwidge, lead hither Bertha!—Is the girl entranced?”

And so indeed it seemed; and had Hugues doubted what he now believed, he had but to gaze on Bertha to be assured of it. Pale as her milk-white robe, she stood like the statue of an inspired sibyl: her long dark locks thrown back, her eyes fixed, and ready to burst with the intense eagerness with which she seemed to endeavour to penetrate the dreadful vision that enchained her soul, she stood powerless, motionless; and even the proud Hedwidge hesitated to obey her father’s injunction; but it was repeated

in a tone that admitted not of hesitation, and Bertha was led by her cousin to the throne.

“ De Blois, she is thine !” said Hugues, as he took her resistless hand and placed it in that of De Blois.

“ By Heaven, it shall not be !” cried Robert, starting from his trance, and furiously dashing away the extended hand of De Blois ; and Bertha, with a scream which petrified the hearts of all who heard it, fell senseless in the arms of Hedwidge.

Hugues, in high wrath, broke up the court : but, as he left the hall, said to De Blois, “ I have sworn it, and, by Heaven, she shall be thine !”

Ere this, Robert had disappeared : the guests departed, and the deep silence of night took possession of the castle.

CHAPTER III.

It was not until some minutes after Bertha woke the following morning, that she could persuade herself that all that presented itself to her bewildered mind was anything more than a wild dream of the night; but the image of Robert, as he fixed his grasp upon him and held back the arm of De Blois—his flashing eye, his attitude of determined defiance—was too vivid for her to doubt its reality. “But why was it?” she said to herself—“what were they doing? Oh! now I know too well—it was De Blois that he held back; my hand was in that of Hugues. Can it be that but for him I should have been the betrothed of De Blois? But no! I never said—I never consented—How was it? I will seek Alice; she

will tell me all. Oh, happy Alice!" added she, as the recollection of what had passed became more strong, "why did thy father—— But no, I do not envy thee, I would not exchange with thee. Am I not happier with the love of Robert than with the hand and riches of Nevers? Am I not prouder as the subject of Robert than as the cherished child of Hugues Capet? But where is Gisèle?" And, hastily rising, she opened the door of the adjoining turret; but the princesses were not there; and, looking out, she saw that the morning was far advanced.

The sun shone brilliantly; but the bright ray which, through the opened casement, illumined the room of Bertha, only increased the feeling of desolation which struck upon the mournful heart of its inmate. She turned with a bewildered brain from the contemplation of all that was gay and joyous, to the darkness and gloom of her own sad heart.

"I can bear this no longer!" she cried;—"this vague remembrance of what is past, this uncer-

tainty—and, oh ! this strange mingling of the future !” And she began to attire herself.

“ Can I assist your grace ?” said one of her attendants, entering.

“ No, Constance ; to-day I need no help, from thee,” she added, mournfully. “ But, tell me, where are the princesses ? I have oversight myself.”

“ They have long been moving,” said Constance, “ and are even now about to ride forth. The king—or kings, I should say, but that miscear is yet unused to it—have been some time in council.”

“ It is well,” said Bertha ; and her attendant left her.

Scarcely had she done so, when a sound of horses was heard, and Bertha, approaching the casement, saw the party mounting for the chase. The noise of the impatient dogs, the tramping of the gallant steeds, the cheerful voices and gay dresses of the party, formed a contrast to her own feelings, from which she would have turned, but she knew

that Robert must be there, and she lingered at the casement in the hope of seeing him. She saw Hedwidge boldly spring upon her high-mettled steed, spurning the assistance of the knights who were disputing the honour of mounting her; she saw the elegant form of the young Nevers, and the intense happiness with which he gazed on the fair creature by whose side he rode; while Alice seemed to have forgotten even her timidity, for the hand of Nevers was on her palfrey's bridle. She saw the stately Hugues, on his richly-caparisoned courser; all traces of the storm of the preceding night seemed to have passed away—his brow was as serene as if ambition and passion had never held sway there: but Bertha knew him too well for the serenity of his countenance to convey one beam of hope to her troubled breast; and when Robert and Giséle came in sight, need I say that she forgot the existence of Hugues, except inasmuch as it was connected with that of Robert? In looking at him, she saw the only object that could impart to her one

ray of happiness. In the listlessness with which he abandoned the rein to his horse—in the deaf ear which he seemed to lend to some entreaty of Gisele's—in the air of abhorrence with which he turned from De Blois, who approached to adjust some part of her caparison—in his searching look towards her own well-known casement—in the ready wave of the hand as he descried her white garment,—she was reminded that she was loved, and cared not when the voice of Hugues, chiding his lingering pace, made the whole party set off at a rate which soon took them out of sight of Bertha's tower.

But the gay pageant left her not despairing; and though, when she could no longer behold the well-known figure of her lover, she sank upon her couch, and wept, yet they were not tears of bitterness that fell from her dark eyelashes, but it was the disburdening of a loaded heart—of a spirit oppressed; and when Bertha rose from her seat, it was to fall upon her knees in prayer to Him who had till now protected her,

and with a lightened spirit, and an eye again brightened by hope, to implore assistance and guidance in the troublous ways in which she feared her path would lie. But, at length, her lips no longer moved, and yet she prayed long and fervently ;—need I say for whom ? No ; for the colour that rises on her cheek, and the mild lustre of her upraised eye, have told it.

She rose, and proceeded to arrange the dark hair which, in graceful but unheeded ringlets, hung around her lovely neck ; and, as she clasped the diamond circlet that confined them, she was startled by a pebble falling on the floor of her apartment, and, running to the casement, she saw Robert standing below. He pointed to a grove at some little distance, and, going in that direction, seemed by his gestures to invite her following him.

Hastily throwing her veil around her, she descended with a beating heart the narrow staircase of the adjoining turret, and soon found herself

in the basking sunshine of a lovely summer's morning.

The mind of Bertha was not naturally insensible to the beauties of a day like this ; but now she hurried on, heedless of the blithe songs of the birds and busy humming of the numerous insects rejoicing in the brilliant sunbeam. She sometimes cast a timid look around her, fearing lest she should be hindered ; but not a sound was heard, save that of the birds and insects : the attendants were dispersed in their different occupations, and the sentinels were drowsily basking in the court of the palace. At last she entered the grove, and again breathed in its silence and shade, when the figure of Robert, leaning against a tree at some little distance, caught her eye. He turned, and saw her, and hastily advanced to meet her. She saw that he was pale and agitated ; his eye was sunk, and bore the traces of a sleepless night.

“ Bertha,” he said, “ I have stolen this moment to tell thee I must leave thee for a time—

I trust but for a short time—to bid thee farewell, and to ask of thee one question that is already answered in mine heart, but I would fain hear it from thy lips ere I depart. They tell me, Bertha, that thou lovest De Blois—that thou didst consent last night to wed him; nay, that thou wouldst now have been his, but that—but that—I could not see it!”

“And never shalt thou see it, Robert! Oh! didst thou wait to hear me say it is false? thine own heart told thee it was so. Robert, thou knowest there is but one I love.”

Robert seized her hand, and pressed it to his lips. “Bertha, dearest, mark me, for my time here must be brief. This morn my father, in council, charged me with a mission of importance to his vassal the Count of Champagne, with the excuse that it was meet, in token of our new-made amity, that I should be his guest. In vain did I remonstrate, till at last my father’s wrath arising, he charged me with cowardice and fear, in face of the whole council, and bade midnight find me on

the way to Champagne. I must obey; and, in sooth, I know not how my tarrying here could help us. Bertha, what my father once has willed, thou knowest he will move all to perfect: he will still try to make thee wed De Blois; promise me it shall not be! If aught doth make thee fear it whilst I am from hence, thou knowest my page De Courcy, with him I leave the fleetest of my steeds; charge him with one line for me—he is trustworthy and loves me well—and I will straightway be with thee.”

“No, Robert, I will not send to thee,” said Bertha, sadly. “I will not bring on thee thy father’s curse; I will not rob thee of the crown that well becomes thy brow. Mine shall not be the hand to snatch from thee thy fair inheritance: should thy father menace me again with that on which I dare not think, there is for me one asylum, which, though it may exclude all hope, will yet shut out all fear;—in a convent I will and my days, and though I may not see thee, I may pray for thee!”

“ Bertha, do not !” he cried. “ Why shut out Hope, while yet she lives for us ? Why——”

“ And does Hope yet live for us ?” said Bertha. “ Oh, Robert ! let her not deceive thee ! Thy calm reason tells thee, thy father would sooner see thee dead than wedded to thy subject !”

“ Bertha, I am not deceived,” said Robert. “ I know that while my father lives I may not call thee mine ; but, Bertha, I shall one day be monarch of this realm, and I here do swear to thee, that till that day no earthly power shall make me wed ; and on that day, Bertha, I will hold thy hand again, and bid thee share my throne—only promise me that thou wilt not despair.”

“ I will not, Robert !—oh, no ! for it were sinful. It is not when the winds howl, and the tempest threatens, and the dark waves beat against the frail bark, that the skilful pilot sleeps ; nor will he then forsake the vessel he has guided through smooth seas and peaceful tides.”

“Thou sayest true, my Bertha; and when the storms do arise—and truly the horizon darkens, let us trust in that Pilot who will not forsake us; but, though our course may lie among rocks and quick-sands, will guide us safe at last!—Bertha, my beloved, farewell!”

He kissed her brow; in one moment he was gone, and changed were both ere again they met.

CHAPTER IV.

It was on a stormy evening in autumn, that a horseman, accompanied by a single page, rapidly urged his way on the road which leads from Paris to Orleans. From his lofty mien and noble person—from the beauty of the animal he rode, it would be inferred that he was not one of common rank. A deep but manly sorrow seemed impressed upon his features; but the eagerness with which he spurred on his noble courser—the fire that now and then, amid the surrounding obscurity, shone from his dark eye—proved that some more than ordinarily exciting feeling urged him on. The road was desolate and bad, but he rode as one that knew it well: the night, from

being gloomy, became tempestuous; and the lightning, that darted through the sky, accompanied by loud peals of thunder in rapid succession, was the only light that beamed upon the road of the horseman. The storm at length became frightful, and, blinded by the pelting rain, wet to the skin, and alarmed at the violence of the tempest, the poor page, who had till now uncomplainingly struggled to keep pace with his lord, at length began to flag.

"My lord," said he, "is surely beside himself; the late event hath unsettled his mind. Is this a time or season for him, thus untended, to scour the country in this style, and on such a night? Ha! there's another flash! By my troth, I like it not. What can make him ride thus? I do misdoubt me it is some evil spurs him on; and who can tell where it may lead him? Not I, in faith: but I will e'en see if I can stay his course, an I can get up and speak to him. My lord," said he, as he joined his master, and pulled in his steed, "the night

is——” But his lord dashed on, as though he knew not he had spoken to him. “Alack ! alack !” said the poor page, “ my dear lord is demented. I thought as much, by the way in which he rode ! He were no fool that found his road by day across this moor ; but to find it in such a night as this, one must be led by some strange influence. God send it lead him to no harm ! This were a nice place to fall in with some evil spirit, or some—— Hush ! what was that ? *Ave Maria gratia !* Ha ! it was but the horse’s hoof. Well, come what may, I will not leave him ; my grandsire told me he would one day need my service, and now, methinks, the time is come.”

Thus communed the page with himself. Long did the night seem to him, and at last he doubted if e’er it would end. At last it did ; but daybreak found them still urging on their tired steeds. The storm gradually died away ; but the still, dead calm that succeeded, seemed to the page yet more awful.

At last the sun burst forth in all his majesty,

and the gay lark gladly mounting, poured forth his blithe welcome. The brilliant beams lighting up the dew, seemed to turn, as with a fairy's power, all that they glanced on into diamonds. The song of the skylark, the cheering influence of the sunbeams, the bracing morning air, and the sweet smell of the earth refreshed by the rain, brought comfort to the heart of the wearied page; and his spirit rose again in all the elasticity of his age, (for he was not more than seventeen,) and his bright blue eye once more shone amidst his auburn locks, still dripping with the night's rain.

But it was now no such easy matter to keep up the tired animals, who through the night had vied with the wind in swiftness; and the knight, though regardless of the morning's beauty, seemed at last to compassionate his steed, and in some measure slackened his pace. Encouraged by this, and excited, as well by the weariness of his horse, as by the cravings of hunger which now began to

seize him, the page rode up to his master's side and once more addressed him.

"Thou knowest this road well, my lord; is there not nigh some hostelrie, where we may refresh our horses, and take our morning's meal?"

"How dost thou say, boy?—I know the road well! Pr'ythee, who told thee so?"

"Thine own course, my lord; for, in the darkness of the night and the roaring of the storm, thou didst not e'en hesitate as to thy road, and it is no easy one to find."

"True, boy, I have been this road before. But thou art hungry, and our steeds are weary; well may they be so, for they have not rested since yestreen. At what hour did we leave Paris, boy?"

"At nine, my lord; and now it is six—I judge by the sun rising."

"Two more hours' ride is yet before us. Thou shalt rest one hour, d'Arcy, at yonder hamlet;

more I cannot give thee, for the hour of ten must see me at Blois."

"At Blois, my lord! is it thither thou dost ride?—have we then passed Orleans?"

"More than two hours ago; but thou didst not see it, for we turned to our left, and took not the high road through it. I tell thee, I go to Blois; but I do not bid thee proclaim it. Thou art trusty, d'Arcy: at Paris they believe me in mine own closet; thou needst not undeceive them."

"Trust me, my lord, I will not. But here is a village where we may recruit."

"Tis well," said the knight; "I will pursue my route on foot, whilst thou dost break thy fast. Linger not, but join me with my steed in one hour's time. Be cautious, and be speedy."

The page bowed low, and, on his lord's dismounting, slowly proceeded through the village in hopes of discovering some friendly hostelry; but none such met his eye. The villagers left off their rustic occupations—for they were already

astir—to gaze at the noble but weary steeds, and the handsome youth who reined them ; and much they marvelled at their spattered condition, which showed that they had travelled through the night. The page marked the curiosity expressed in their countenances, and hesitated to address them, till his eye resting upon the figure of an elderly matron whose appearance bespoke less inquisitiveness than most of her neighbours, he accosted her, and asked if she could tell him where to procure refreshment for his horses and himself. Calling to one of her neighbours, the good dame bade him show the way to the stables, while, much to the envy and annoyance of many a younger dame, she took upon herself the charge of providing the repast for the page, whilst he superintended the feeding of the horses. Having done so, he returned to the dwelling of the matron, where a plenteous though homely meal had been prepared for him, and to which he did full justice, for it was long since he had broken fast, and the good dame wondered at the expedition with

which her cheer disappeared. Her reflections were interrupted by the entrance of some neighbours, eager to impart important tidings.

"You have heard the news, dame, from Paris, I doubt not?"

"I have heard of none, neighbour, since three days ago, when they said King Hugues was like to die."

"They say he's dead now," said another.

"Is he dead?" said the dame, with some emotion.

"So they say," rejoined the former speaker.

"A courier has just been through the village from Blois, whither he went post-haste from Paris on the king's death, to announce it: he must have passed through here betimes this morning."

"And yet it is strange he did not report it here," said the matron.

"Tush! neighbour; he had no time to tarry, I warrant me: e'en now he stayed but to quaff one cup, and he is far by this on his road. He said no more, but that King Hugues was dead."

"We shall soon hear all about it," said the dame, "for here is Pierre from Blois this morning;" and a tall comely peasant entered.

"How fares it with thee, mother?" said he.

"Well, my son," replied the dame: "but I fain would know what news thou bringest from Blois: they say that Hugues is dead."

"It is true; he died yestreen. I know no more, for the courier who came to Blois scarce said another word, he was in such haste."

"But you, sir, may know more?" he added, turning to the page, who was still regaling himself in a corner of the cottage. "You seem to have come from far?"

"I know the king was at so bad a pass, he was not like to live some days ago," said d'Arcy: "more I cannot say."

The neighbours, disappointed, left the cottage; and the old woman, reaching her distaff, seated herself in the chimney-corner, whilst her son vied with d'Arcy in the eagerness with which he devoured the viands before him. The old dame

sat some time in silence, till she left off plying her distaff to wipe a tear that had gathered in her eye.

"Strange," muttered she, "that I should weep for him now—I who, ten years since, would have given worlds that he had died! But it is hard to hear of the proud spirit that is for ever quenched, and the kingly power laid so low, and not shed one tear over them. Well! I knew not what is best; but I mind the time when I would that he had died, before two young hearts were well nigh broken, and two young creatures' hopes and love blighted by his sternness."

"Thou speakest of the king, good dame?" inquired the page.

"Of him that was king yestreen, fair youth," rejoined his hostess; "with whose features I was once as familiar as with those of mine own son there. He was then in the pride of his glory; but what is Hugues Capet now?"

"Thou wast doubtless about the court, good

dame?" said the page, surprised both at her speech and manner, evidently above her present station.

"I was about the person of the Princess Bertha of Burgundy."

"Ha! sayest thou so?—she that wedded the Count de Blois?"

"The same, my son. She was a fair and lovely creature."

"I have heard it whispered that she was constrained to marry him against her own consent," said the page.

"It is a sad tale, my son," said the old dame.

"I know it all well; but it has rarely passed my lips: for while Hugues lived, I would not say it; but now my tale cannot harm him, and I will e'en tell it thee, for thou seemest an honest youth.

"I was tiring-woman to the Princess Bertha, and strange as it may seem to thee that I should now inhabit this humble cot, I tell thee I would not change my lowly garb and humble fare for

all the costly robes and princely banquets of the court; still less would I exchange my cheerfulness and peace for all the pride and misery I have seen there.

“ When the Princess Bertha, after her father’s death, went to Paris to be brought up with the daughters of Hugues, I accompanied her; for I had tended her from her birth, and could ill bear to part with her, though it would have spared me much sorrow had I stayed in mine own happy Burgundy. Unaccustomed to the refinements and elegancies of a court, my rustic and simple habits and manners well fitted me for a gibe for the impertinent sarcasms of the courtly dames attendant on the other princesses; and many a bitter taunt and petty malice did I experience at their hands. But I bore it all, and much more would I have borne for the sake of the lovely girl to whose service I had attached myself, and in whose love and kindness I found an ample compensation for all my petty griefs, which after a time were forgotten in the torrent that rushed

upon her tender heart. From her childhood she had been used to relate her little griefs to me. Often has she sobbed out upon my knee the little tale of Hedwidge's oppression in the childish frolic; or run, frightened, to tell me how the king's loud voice and ungentle manner had scared her. As she grew older, she would tell me all that troubled or rejoiced her: but there was one thing that she never *told* me, though long and intimate friendship had given me too clear an insight into every movement of her soul, for me not to see that a deep attachment subsisted between her and the prince. Yea, boy, be not thus surprised—it was but natural; for he had been her playmate and companion for many a year—had watched the graces of her form and treasures of her soul expand—and when they had attained their full maturity, he must have had an eye of marble and a heart of stone that could have gazed on them unmoved. Even Hugues himself I have seen look upon her, till his eye has been fixed and his soul rapt in admiration of her loveliness: but I doubt

if he were aware, for a long time, of the love his son bore her, though I cannot but think he must sometimes have suspected it. But I know not: he was always engaged in business or in war, and saw the princesses only at long intervals.

“It was not till the night of his return from the expedition against the Duke of Lorraine, that he knew all. He had, they say, sworn upon his princely oath to the Count de Blois, who had long loved the Princess Bertha, on the battlefield, that if he performed some enterprise of great import and risk, he would reward him with her hand. Oh! it was a rash vow; but once uttered, it would not have been Hugues had he retracted it. I know not rightly what it was that occurred that night, for I was not among the attendants in the hall; but I was called, when the court was broken up in confusion, to bear the princess to her apartment, for she had fainted, and it was long ere we recovered her from her deadly swoon. The next day the prince was sent upon a mission to Champagne—such, at least,

was the excuse given for his absence ; but such we since have seen was not the cause. The morning following, the princess was sent for by the king, and, in presence of the council, desired that night to marry De Blois. Calmly, but firmly, she refused.

“ Hugues, enraged at her resistance, charged her with love for the king his son ; and demanded of her, if she had ever dared to think that he would countenance such presumption, or let his son disgrace his throne and name by so unworthy an alliance. She replied, that her family was too nearly allied to his own, for her union to be a disgrace to any prince of Christendom : but that she had never aspired to that alliance ; she did not then ; and only prayed that no union should be forced upon her, and that she might be allowed to retire from court.

“ The king interrupted her, unable to contain his rage ; and told her, that, though she were the prince’s wife, he would have a divorce between

them; for he had sworn that she should wed De Blois—nay, he told her, that if she did not, his curse should fall upon the prince, and he should be an outcast and disowned;—thinking to make her very love for him the means of her renouncing him. But she stood unmoved, except that her eye flashed, and her lip curled, as I never yet had seen it, when she replied—

“‘Thinkest thou thus to work upon me? Thinkest, then, thou couldst disown thy son, and take from him his just inheritance? I tell thee, Hugues, that in the hearts of thine own subjects he has a sure defence against thine unkingly artifice and unmanly persecution. I tell thee, here, before thy council, and before thy face, Hugues, thou durst not disinherit him!’

“‘By the crown I wear!’ exclaimed the king, his frenzy transporting him beyond all command of himself, ‘this is too much! Am I, on my throne, and surrounded by my subjects, to be thwarted by a girl, a child? Know, since thou

doubtest my power to disinherit him, that the Church of Rome is not to be daunted by the popularity of a beardless boy, or the ravings of an infatuated girl! Know that, if thou darest to unite thyself to thy king, not only my curse, but that of the holy church—nay, that of Heaven itself, shall fall upon you both! But thou art too despicable for me to reason with! Once more, to-morrow, I will question thee: if thou wilt then obey me, as in allegiance and in duty thou art bound, 'tis well; if not, beware!

“She left the council-room unmoved, unshaken: the rest of the day I saw her not, but they say she spent it in the chapel. Howbeit, when I assisted her at night to doff her robes—and I could almost affirm that I had done it yesternight, so vivid is her figure now before me—I scarce could think it was mine own loved mistress, so sadly was she changed! She laid her down to rest; and after I had put out the lamp, I sat me down behind her couch, though she knew not I was there, for

I could not leave her. Sleep, however, overcame me, till I was awakened by a voice which seemed in the apartment, and I listened, thinking she had spoken; and, Oh!" said the old dame, shuddering, "Oh! that I had never listened—Oh! that I had never heard those dreadful words, which, sleeping or waking, have seldom been out of mine ears! The deep and solemn voice, the awful stillness of the hour, and, oh! the import of those words, still at times assail me, till my reason totters under their influence! But at the time I sat too terrified to move or breathe, till, when the voice uttered that part of the excommunication service, 'Cursed be they upon the earth, and under the earth,' &c. a piercing shriek aroused me. In an instant I stood by the princess's couch, and held her cold hand, and kissed her marble brow; but she lay motionless, and I did not hear her breathe. Never shall I forget that moment! The voice had ceased, and all was still as death itself. Once I thought I heard a footstep; but it stopped. In anguish, I called my child by name;

I bade her speak to me—tell me that she lived ; but she spoke not. I rushed frantic from the room to seek assistance, when, to my astonishment, by the aid of a lantern which he held, I saw the king before me ! It was not till some time afterwards that I discovered in the wall of Bertha's tower a niche, in which he must have stood—for I cannot doubt 'twas him ; whilst the thinness of the partition that was left betwixt it and her room, caused the voice to sound as in the chamber. She recovered from one swoon to fall into another, till at last, near daybreak, she sank into a deep but troubled slumber ; and, as soon as she awoke, was ordered to the presence of the king. The Princess obeyed the summons without reluctance, and with a calmness and decision of manner that I could not then explain ; but I have often thought since that she was not rightly herself that day. Unmoved as she had appeared the day before at the threats of the king, when pondering on them, she must have felt their force ; for she knew how absolute was the power of

Hugues with the Church of Rome. The wrath of man she would have braved ; but when the wrath and curse of Heaven was to be invoked upon them, it was enough to shake her powers of defiance ; and when at night, in silence and in darkness, that awful voice broke upon her slumber, as if in execution of the impending threat, oh ! it was enough to shake a stronger mind than hers at that moment, harassed and distracted by the sorrows of the preceding days—and all know how deep is the first wound of sorrow in the young unscathed heart.

“ Upon the king’s asking what was her decision, she replied, ‘ To conform in all things to his will ; and only entreated, that if he still persisted in his intention of marrying her to the Count de Blois, their union might not be delayed.’ The king thanked her for her compliance, and told her that, as the presence of De Blois was immediately necessary among his vassals, all should be in readiness that night to celebrate her

bridal, and that she should accompany him to his castle of Blois. He would have loaded her with caresses ; but she hastily retired to her room, and spent the rest of the day in an apathy from which nought could rouse her.

“ Till towards evening she looked anxiously and often from the casement, as if she was expecting some one ; and once asked me if I had seen De Courcy, the prince’s page, that day. I told her I had not seen him since the day before, and I thought that he had gone to join the prince.

“ She appeared satisfied, and did not again address me, till I had decked her in her nuptial robes, and the princesses came to lead her to their father’s presence ; and it was with a breaking heart I saw my child depart ; nor could the young princesses keep from tears as they looked upon her pale cheek and sunken eye ; and the sweet Gisèle, who had on her knees entreated her father not to prosecute this union, sobbed aloud upon her cousin’s neck as she led

her to the chapel; but she only answered by a ghastly smile, as if unconscious of the cause of her cousin's sorrow.

"In the chapel, the only sign she gave of consciousness to what was passing around her, was the half-frightened, yet half-longing, look she constantly turned to the door opposite to that at which she had entered, as if expecting to see some one appear; and, as the ceremony proceeded, her restlessness became so evident as to excite the remarks of the spectators. They went on, however, with the service. When they came to the part at which she was to utter the fell words which must seal her fate as the wife of De Blois, she turned for the last time a look so searching, so eager, so prolonged, towards the door, that the king anxiously recalled her attention to the ceremony. A settled despair stole over her features as she mechanically repeated the words of the priest. The ceremony closed, and for an instant there was a pause.

A sound was heard as of some one arriving—a voice, which sent the fire to the eye of Hugues, and bade the blood rush into the pale cheek of Bertha, as she stood a victim at the altar. In an instant the prince was seen at the entrance of the chapel. His air, wild and desperate, became furious as his eye caught the figure of Bertha at the altar in bridal array, her passive hand clasped in that of De Blois. With flashing eyes and clenched hands he strode through the chapel; while the king, alarmed at his menacing and furious air, called loudly to the attendants to stop him; which they would have done, but Bertha suddenly exclaimed; ‘Forbear!’ in a voice so deep and startling as to cause instant silence through the chapel, for it seemed as though a thing of marble had started into life. She drew her figure to its utmost height, as with a firm step she advanced to the king: the features, which through the day had borne the ashy paleness of death, were now stamped by the calmness

of despair, and Hugues unconsciously shrink as she approached him.

“ ‘Thou need’st not, now, proud Hugues, fear to see thy son: had he come one hour sooner, the sin of this day might not have been laid to thy charge. But now thy cruel schemes are consummated — thy rash oath fulfilled. Thou hast nought to fear from him, or from me, the worm that thou hast crushed! — Robert! rave not! ’tis done — our doom is fixed. Forget me, as I must thee; or remember me but as the playmate of thy childhood, as the Bertha who loved thee in thy youth — who will love thee in death! I must be forgotten, or thought of as a passing vision of the night, which leaves no clue by which to trace its origin — no monument to mark its fall. Robert, farewell!’ ”

“ He tried to speak — he tried to rush towards her; but what speech could tell the agony that swelled his manly breast? — he tottered a few paces, and fell in a strong convulsion on the floor. Bertha’s soul shuddered, her eye closed, and she

would have fallen, but De Blois caught her, and dragged her from the chapel. A sound of hoofs was heard, and then a noise as of many mounting; in another moment the attendants galloped after their lord.

"I asked myself if it were a dream; but no—my child was gone!" said the dame, covering her face with her hands, and sobbing aloud.

"And mine hour is long since passed," said the page: "I must ride hard to make up for this delay. Good mother, I thank thee for thy tale: but tell me, for I am in haste, does the Count de Blois still live?"

"He died in hunting some time since," replied the dame; "but not till his usage had well-nigh killed the Princess. She was ever a meek and dutiful wife to him: but he knew that she had never loved him, and well did he revenge her former coldness. But grief takes long to kill: she has lived through it, and now spends her time in charity and prayer; and though the bloom of life is faded, and the cheek has

lost its colour, and the eye somewhat of its lustre, yet I do hope there is still peace and happiness in store for her."

"That is there!" said the page with emphasis, starting from his seat. Then, observing in the countenance of his hostess surprise he might not tarry to dispel, he cast a coin upon the table, and in another moment was galloping on the road to Blois.

CHAPTER V.

SOME years have passed since the circle of young and lovely maidens of which we spoke assembled in the palace of Hugues over their embroidery. Since then, their circle had been broken ; the youth and spirits which then enlivened their occupation, in more than one instance chilled by the marble touch of Time. With some of them, however, the tyrant had shown more indulgence. As the wife of the young and gallant Nevers, Alice had spent the last ten years in peaceful happiness : Gisèle, who had passed the interval from extreme youth to womanhood amid the increased prosperity of the new dynasty, the darling of her father and the ornament of his court, was now the fond and blooming bride of the Count de Ponthieu. With

her, Time had passed lightly—had left the archness of her laughing eye, the buoyancy of her fairy step, the lightness of her youthful heart, unchanged. Not so had he dealt with her who now sat in solitude, musing on the changes which, since she had been one of that gay circle, had made her a wife, a widow. Her cheek, shaded by the long mourning veil which fell to her feet, would have been ghastly from its deadly paleness, but for the mild and holy expression of her eye, which now in sadness was cast down, now raised in fervent prayer to Heaven. The young and fairy form, which kings had loved to look upon, was still as exquisitely moulded and as fair as then; but it too was changed, for the grace of the maiden had given place to the dignity of the matron. She sat in a vaulted and capacious room, lighted at one end by an oriel window, which threw into the apartment a subdued light according well with the feelings of its inmate. Before the chair in which she sat was an oratory raised above the floor; and the cushion which lay before the cru-

cifix still bore the impress of the knee that had been bent there. To pour out before that crucifix her overburthened heart, had long been the chief solace of Bertha of Burgundy. It was not, though, her only one; for in watching the playful gambols of her only child, a gleam of pleasure sometimes seemed to rouse her from her usual sadness: but it was like a transient sunbeam on a stormy day, which only heightens the gloom which succeeds it; for the sound of his name, or a particular expression of his countenance, would again plunge her into abstraction. He had been for some time playing at the other end of the apartment to that where Bertha was sitting, and now, tired of his pastime, tried to call her attention to him. Finding that she did not heed, he came to her, and roused her from her reverie by gently pulling her robe. She turned and patted the fair cheek of the beautiful boy, who climbed upon her chair.

“And what hast thou to say to me, young knight?” said she, smiling.

"I have nought to say to thee," replied the child, roguishly; "but I have something to give to thee. Nay, but, mother, thou shalt not have it yet, till thou hast told me a long tale."

"I cannot now, my child. Go, bid Blanche tell thee one."

"Nay, mother, tell me one thyself. In sooth I love not Blanche's tales; for she only repeats how brave and how good King Robert is; and how, when I was christened, he gave her a ring of gold, and how the tears stood in his eyes when he saw me. Did he love me, mother?"

"I know not, for I did not see him with thee, child," said Bertha. "I could not," she added, shuddering as she thought of the agony of soul with which Robert must have looked upon her child—the child of De Blois.

"Why came he here, mother?"

"Because the king his father, and the state, had named him thy godfather."

"What was his father's name, mother?"

"Hughes."

"What, he that is dead?"

"He is not dead, child."

"I heard Blanche say that he was, but now."

"What meanest thou?" said Bertha, starting from her seat. "Who told her so? Go, run! bid her come to me, quick."

"I will; but here is what she bade me give thee," said the child, putting into her hand a packet.

"Nay, stay not; run, boy!—But, what! a letter? It is Giséle's handwriting—'With speed.' What bodes this seal in black? 'Tis true—Hugues is dead!"

It is seldom that one can hear of the death of him whom one has known well, without some emotion; and Bertha, in whose mind even the name of Hugues was associated with such bitter recollections, such heart-rending scenes, sank on her seat in a flood of tears. Long and bitterly she wept.

"And yet, why should I weep?" said she.

“ ’Tis true, Hugues sent for me, a poor and desolate orphan, and brought me to his court; but, oh! that he had never done so! Oh! that I had lived in poverty, in obscurity—that I had never known the pomp and splendour of a court! But then I had never known Robert—he could not then have loved me!—But does he love me now?”

“ Bertha, dost thou doubt it?” said a voice beside her.

She turned from her seat—she started, and covering her brow with her clasped hands, exclaimed, “ Oh! do not mock my misery—begone! begone! Look not on me now; I am not thy Bertha, I am changed—yes, changed!” she added, “ for my brain is turned. Oh! that I had died before the bright visions of my youth had risen in triumphant mockery to gaze upon my wretchedness! Yet, wilt thou stay?” she added, withdrawing her hands, and looking full in the face of Robert. “ Think not to deceive me, for I know thou art not he; he is young, and his

eye is bright, and he smiles upon me, and does not look reproachfully, as thou dost !”

“ Oh, Bertha ! say not so,” said Robert, taking her hand, “ for I am Robert, who loves thee still, though I do not smile as once I did ; and I am come to hold thy hand—to bid thee share my throne !”

* * * * *

A few more months passed away, and one blithe song of jubilee resounded through the land of merry France. The old put on their best attire, and the young decked themselves in their holiday garb, as they prepared to lead the festive dance. A courtly bridal had that morning graced the palace of the king, and an impatient set of gallant youths and lovely maidens now waited but their leader to begin the dance. Yet the young Count d'Arcy lingered, as he passed with his fair partner on his arm, to whisper in the ear of one of the spectators, “ Said I not right, Dame Constance, when I told thee that years of peace and happiness yet awaited

thy noble mistress ? Look now upon our lovely queen—the light of joy that breathes upon her face, and tell me I was right.”

“Thou wert, my son,” replied the dame ; “and may Heaven hear the prayers of the thousands who this day invoke its blessing on the union of Robert of France and Bertha of Burgundy !”

CHAPTER VI.

For some time it seemed as if young d'Arcy's prediction and Dame Constance's prayers had been fulfilled ; it seemed that Heaven at length had smiled upon the love that had outlived so many storms, and had made Robert and Bertha its agents for diffusing joy, and peace, and plenty over a smiling and prosperous land. The people of France, long shackled by the unrelenting strictness of Hugues' government, breathed again under the mild and benevolent dominion of Robert, whose bravery, virtues, and talents had long rendered him their idol and their hope. Blessed in each other's love, in their people's affection, in the prosperity of their kingdom, and in the opportunities of doing good which their high

station afforded them, Robert and Bertha drank largely of the cup of happiness now presented to them, and whose sweetness it seemed fate would have them experience in its highest degree, that its loss might be still greater when the golden chalice should be for ever dashed from their lips. Deeply they quaffed that cup together, and fondly dreamed its treasure inexhaustible.

Many were the anxious eyes that looked out upon the aspect of the morning, on a day which had been announced as the one on which the queen would give a fête to the young, the gay, the brave of France, at which the king and court were to be present. It was a lovely summer's day; and many a young heart chided the slow approach of the hour of meeting.

On that morning, Bertha, in her tiring-room, busied with her embroidery, thought with happiness on the pleasure she was conferring on many a young and innocent creature, and turned to seek confirmation of her thought in the features of her attendant, a fair girl who sat beside her.

But the eye of Bertha rested not on aught that spoke of joy. Regardless of the morning's beauty, which rejoiced so many of her age and sex, the young Clotilde sat turned from the light, which harmonized not with the sadness of her reflections: her eyes were cast down in deep and mournful reverie; and the fairy fingers that still held the replenished needle, were forgetful of their task, for the embroidered glove lay neglected at her feet.

"Thou dost disappoint me, Clotilde," said her mistress in a tone of assumed displeasure, while she really felt concern at the sadness of her favourite attendant.

"Madam!" said Clotilde, starting, while the blood rushed to her cheek, and the ready tear to her eye.

"Nay, my child, start not thus," said the queen; "but tell me why it is, that, when I look on thee, and think to see thee gay and smiling, I find thee sad and thoughtful? Is not to-day our festival? Nay, come, bring hi-

ther those flowers, and I will deck thee for the fête ; and, while a queen's hands twine thy garland, thou must smile, wert thou an anchorite. Kneel here, and let me twist this wild rose in those golden locks of thine. No, it will not do," she added, after a pause, and looking at her performance with a dissatisfied air : " Clotilde, those wild flowers will not lend their aid to one who has forsaken their fields and bowers for a kingly palace, and say that flowers of higher culture only should deck so courtly a damsel as thou art become. But see !" she added, as the young prince bounded into the apartment with a handful of lovely blossoms, " some kind fairy has heard me : bring them to me, Robert, quickly." But the child, laughing at his mother's eagerness, laid them down at the feet of Clotilde. " How now, my child ! why not bring them to me ?"

" Because they were not for thee, mother ; d'Arcy told me they were for Clotilde."

"Ha!" said the queen. But Clotilde quickly interrupted her—

"I thank your grace," she said to the young prince, "but I need them not; my hair is already decked; they will better suit the queen, your mother."

"What! not wear d'Arcy's flowers," said the queen in surprise, "and he himself the brightest flower of our court! Nay, girl, but thou shalt indeed; I must pull out that shabby wild rose."

"Nay, madam, let the wild rose stay."

"No, no, it must not," said Bertha, playfully snatching from her favourite's hair the flower she had twined in it. But Clotilde, still kneeling by the queen, and joining her hands in an attitude of entreaty, said in a voice faltering with emotion,

"I do beseech your grace; I—I may not, I cannot wear the Count d'Arcy's flowers!" And, bursting into tears, she hid her face in her sovereign's robe.

"Robert," said Bertha to her child, who was

playing on the floor with the rejected flowers.
“leave those blossoms, and tell d’Arcy——”

“That Clotilde will not wear them?” asked the boy.

“Not so, boy: bid him summon us when the fête is prepared and all is ready. And now, Clotilde,” said she, raising the weeping girl, and placing her on a seat beside her, “tell me, what is this I have observed between thee and the young Count d’Arcy? Thou knowest how many are the predictions already formed of his future fame; thou knowest how great is his love and fidelity to our persons: how highly my husband esteems him thou mayest guess by his charging him even now with the mission to the Duke of Aquitaine; and for myself, I tell thee, I know no gallant of our court on whom I would so gladly bestow my favourite. I saw, then, with pleasure that a kindly feeling had sprung up between you; that at the board or in the dance thou wert young d’Arcy’s choice: and, though thou sobbest now, Clotilde, I have seen thee

smile when he has come to claim thy hand for the dance. Tell me why, then, I have of late seen thee dejected? —why dost thou start as d'Arcy joins us, when thou wast wont to smile? —why wilt thou dance with any knight but him, and deck thy hair with any flowers but those that he has sent thee? Clotilde, thou knowest thou lovest him: thou art too foolish, girl."

"Nay, madam, say not so," said the sobbing girl: "if thou art displeased with me, I am indeed unhappy; but if thou canst answer me one question, I will not be dejected. Tell me that I, the poor, the dowerless Clotilde, dependant on your grace's bounty for my very sustenance, am a fit alliance for the young, the brave, the rich Count d'Arcy, the darling of his sovereign and of the court, and I will be cheerful. But thou canst not," she added.

"But I will make thee such," said Bertha. "Thinkest thou, when I told thy dying parent I did charge me with thy fortunes, that I meant thou shouldst be portionless? Let not such

fears, I charge thee, prevent thy loving d'Arcy with all thine heart, nor deter thee from thine allegiance to thy sovereign," she added, playfully. to stop the thanks of her adopted daughter. "Nay, come, kneel down again, and I will put in thy hair poor d'Arcy's lovely blossoms; and thou shalt lead the dance with him to-night, and send him with a light heart into Aquitaine; and when he is returned, I will some day deck thy hair again,—but not with such flowers as these. What shall they be, Clotilde?—what sayest thou to orange flowers, or to—— Ha! who is there? It is d'Arcy! Come, see, young knight, how tastefully I have twined these lovely flowers in Clotilde's hair! But dost thou bring me any tidings from the king? Methinks he should be here e'en now."

"He bade me tell your grace," replied d'Arcy. "that business of importance hath detained him, when on the point of joining you. To-day, he says, he cannot grace your fête; but he will wait in the western turret your grace's return at sunset."

“Nay,” said the queen, “this is disappointing: I had hoped that his presence would have given zest to our festivities. But come, Clotilde, it shall not be said that Bertha robs his subjects of his thought or care, or, for her own selfish pleasure, keeps him from the great duties of his station.—But where is the prince? Come hither, sir truant,” she added, as she took the hand of her child, and, followed by d’Arcy and Clotilde, went to cheer the revels with her presence.

CHAPTER VII.

ACCOMPANIED by her youthful train, Bertha sought the pleasure-grounds of the palace, which had been prepared under her own auspices for the various amusements of the fête ; and, unconscious of the storm that was gathering, entered into the pleasures of the scene around her with all the kindness of her nature. It was indeed one to gladden most hearts ; for the eye, as it wandered, rested on nought but was young, and fair, and joyous : but Bertha had been early taught by sad experience the uncertainty of youth's brightest hours, and a cloud passed over her brow as she thought how soon the hearts that danced before her might be crushed, no more to bound with

that buoyancy which belongs only to an early period of youth. But now the sun shone bright, for it was a day of summer ; the air was perfumed with the loveliest flowers, and a numerous circle had assembled in a temporary building which had been erected for the exhibition of feats and games, in vogue among the youths of that period. It had been contrived to represent in miniature the amphitheatre of the Romans, and, like it, was furnished with galleries for the accommodation of spectators, and protected from the heat of the noon-day sun by an awning stretched across it. The eyes of the youthful guests were now turned frequently towards the great entrance, at which the queen was expected, and when the arrival of some of her train announced her approach, their hearts beat high with joyful expectation, and they rose to greet her with one feeling of grateful enthusiasm ;—for Bertha possessed in a great degree that sweetness of expression and manner which finds its way unerringly to the hearts of the young and guileless, and wins their kindest sympathies.

She returned their salutations with grace, and smiled on the assembly as she mounted to the gallery, in which seats had been left vacant for herself and her immediate suite. In that above were ranged the inferior officers of the royal household, and attendants, spectators of the goodly scene. And now the revels commenced. Four chariots appeared in the arena, distinguished by the colour of the dress of the youths who guided them, and which, according to ancient custom, were either red, white, green, or sky-coloured. The lots were drawn, as usual, to determine the order of starting; and this being arranged, the president of the games presented a brodered kerchief to the queen, who dropped it as the signal for starting. All were now absorbed in the interest of the race.

“ Who is the youth who stands so firmly yet so gracefully, and waves his white flag as with security of victory ?” asked Clotilda of the queen.

“ That is the young knight of La Maillerie :

he is a gallant youth, and has already won his spurs. And he in scarlet is the young D'Orval. See ! he has passed all but the knight with the grey steeds ; in one more round he will have passed him."—"That is the fifth time of coming to the goal," said another. "Ha ! see, the red knight is first ; how gracefully he holds his reins on high, and balances himself on one foot."—"He will win ! he will win !" exclaimed the assembly eagerly, as he passed the goal for the sixth time ; and, in the full assurance of victory, the triumphant youth, committing the guidance of the chariot to his eager steeds, and waving his flag on high, looked around the amphitheatre for applause and sympathy. But suddenly his look of triumph was exchanged for one of deep and tender interest, as his eye rested on one spot, from which for some moments it did not depart : no longer urged by the voice of their master, his steeds relaxed in speed, an opportunity not lost by the other knights ; they gained ground fast upon him ; nor was he aware of his situation, till

the chariot of the white knight passing his own, when within a pace of the goal, aroused him to a sense of his defeat.

The acclamations were proportionate to the interest excited by such a closely-contested race. They were long and loud; but there still pervaded a strong feeling in favour of the red knight, enhanced perhaps by the singularity of the circumstance by which he had lost the race. His friends crowded round him with condolences and regrets as he descended from his chariot; but he seemed scarcely to heed, certainly not to deplore his defeat, and congratulating his successful rival, kept his eyes again riveted on the spot which had so strongly attracted them, while a deep sadness seemed to steal over his features.

“What infatuation, what spell, worked upon our red knight’s energies?” exclaimed a few around the queen, who were not entirely engrossed by the applause lavished on his competitor.

“I think I can explain this mystery to your grace,” said a gentleman of the queen’s train.

“ Then do so, good Vermond; for my curiosity is roused by his sudden change of manner; at first he seemed so eager for success.”

“ Then I must inform your grace, it is not only in the race that the red and the white knights are rivals; and that the spell that enchained his powers at so critical a moment, fell from the dark eye of a maiden whom your grace has sometimes deigned to notice with your favour. She sits now in the front row at your grace’s right.”

“ Ha! is it so?—sweet Isabel de Thieremont? I see his eye is still intently gazing on her.”

“ Yes, but your grace will see hers does not meet it. “ I have watched young Isabel from her birth, and know well each expression of her varying countenance. I read a tale to-day in the deep and eager interest with which her eyes followed the course of the white knight’s chariot, from the moment of starting; and I fear me the knight of the red mantle has done the same; for as soon as he glanced towards her, and saw her

regardless of his success, he seemed no more to court it."

"Poor youth! 'Tis sad; and yet he appears kind and noble; for but now I saw him salute the victor, though methought 'twas with a doubtful countenance."

And now a procession, accompanied by music, escorted the victorious youth in his chariot to below the seat of the queen, who, rising gracefully, leaned forward to crown him, and congratulate him on his success.

And now games of wrestling and trials of strength ensued, the details of which are less interesting to the ears of modern damsels, than they were in those days, when they formed the study and amusement of courts in which intellectual culture was little valued, and when distinction in bodily grace and strength formed a knight's chief pretensions to fame.

The last was concluded, the conqueror had laid his antagonist prostrate, and was breathing after a violent contest, when suddenly a tre-

mendous roar as of a wild beast was heard, and an enormous lion, or what seemed a lion, appearing in the arena, sprang upon the astonished combatant, and caused a scream among the assembly. Had a moment's inspection been given ere the formidable beast rushed on his prey, the effect of it might have been less startling ; as it was, even the gladiator was taken by surprise. He recovered just in time to avoid the lion's first rush by stepping aside ; but the creature, still roaring so as to make the building echo, again sprang upon him.

By this time, however, the surprise of the company had given place to curiosity ; for it was evident that the shaggy mane and tawny hide were but an assumed disguise. Still, the monarch of the forest himself could scarce have showed more perseverance in the pursuit of his prey. He roared, he showed his huge tusks, he lashed his tail, as if in anticipation of a feast ; he sprang again and again at his antagonist, and was again avoided, till, wearied at the repetition of his hosti-

lities, and indignant at the joke put upon him. Sir Renaud aimed at the lion a blow, which threw him on his side, incapable of farther aggression; then seizing him roughly by the mane, and pulling violently at it, amid the laughter of the assembly, he found himself holding in one hand the terrific head of the monster, whilst at his feet lay the crest-fallen figure of the court fool. This worthy had been a privileged personage in the reign of Hugues, and one of the very few who could take a liberty with his master—who used to laugh at his deformities as much as at his jests, and was often unfeeling in his requisitions of this unfortunate creature. He therefore enjoyed the sinecure he held in the court of Robert, and, except when he undertook any performance gratuitously—as in the present instance—led an easy and comfortable life. He did not look comfortable, however, at the feet of Sir Renaud; but, after piteous noises and bewailings, set up a hideous braying, which did not arrest the merriment of the company at his miserable appearance.

“ Alack ! alack ! ” groaned the poor fool, “ it is the old tale ; the ass in the lion’s hide got beaten for his folly. Oh ! Sir Renaud, Sir Renaud ! my sweet ears will not soon recover your vigorous pull at my head.” And ridiculously coaxing his large misshapen ears, the poor fool crawled off the arena of his exploit.

Now the party adjourned to the beautiful gardens of the palace, and the lively groups promenaded, and dispersed themselves in the long avenues, and by the side of the sparkling fountains, till the hour of three, when they sat down to a repast in the shade of the trees ; and a dance on the green turf, prolonged much after sunset, concluded the festivities of that joyous day.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the evening of that day, Bertha sat in the embrasure of a window which looked out upon a lovely prospect. The lattice was thrown open, and the perfumed breeze which now and then entered by it seemed to breathe tranquillity and happiness upon the fair creature around whom it played; while the rich beams of the setting sun, lighting upon her luxuriant ringlets and fair brow, seemed to point her out as the one of all earthly creatures on whom they loved to bestow their radiance.

She sat in that half thoughtful, half dreaming mood, in which we sometimes indulge when nothing particularly exciting, whether of joy or sorrow, disturbs the evenness of happiness. Thought

after thought passed through her mind ; they were various, and scarce to be defined ; yet they were all thoughts of joy, and peace, and love.

Far other were the thoughts that held sway at that moment in the bosom of her husband. He had been summoned from her to receive the nuncio of the pope, who had just arrived from Rome, and who, by the rapidity of his journey, and the eagerness with which he demanded instant audience, was supposed to be the bearer of tidings of more than usual moment ; and the page who brought to the king the news of his arrival had observed him start when he announced it. But it was but for an instant ; and Robert, bidding him tell the queen he could not join in the day's festivities, awaited in his closet the interview with the churchman. In those days, when the papal power was rapidly rising to the extraordinary height it afterwards attained, the messengers of its will were not unattended with some degree of awe ; and perhaps no prince of Christendom, however powerful in his own domain,

could await without some degree of anxiety the communications of that power which none might defy.

He sat with his council busied in various affairs till the appointed hour, when, despatching other matters, he prepared to receive the nuncio, and summoned him to his presence. He appeared, followed by several churchmen of high rank: he was a man rather past the middle age, of an imposing and determined countenance. He advanced with a firm and upright step towards the throne, from which Robert had risen to receive him; but, upon the king's offering him a seat on his right hand, he stopped short, and, drawing himself up with dignity, said —

“My business with this council, King Robert, is not of a nature that admits of courtly forms: I bring you from his holiness a message of such import as may well command your undivided thought; nor would it become me, however unworthy the office I hold, to sit beside the con-

temners of the power from whom I hold it—the contemnners of the church itself!”

“Nay, father,” said the king with calmness but with dignity, “we crave your pardon. We knew not that the respect of the King of France to one of so great reputation, and the representative of his holiness, had aught in it of offence, or we had not offered it. But we are impatient to learn the nature of the insult to the papal power of which thou speakest: can it be that any of our council have rebelled against the authority of the holy church?”

“King Robert,” said the legate in a deep and solemn tone, and bending on the king an eye of reproach, whose dark brilliancy seemed as it would penetrate his inmost soul, “thou art thyself the offender! Nay, hear me!” he added —“hear the charge against thee, and the message I bring thee from his holiness. Know that because thou hast, from the sinful and rebellious nature of thine heart, in contempt of the autho-

city of the Pope, thy master in all things of spiritual import—in contempt of the injunctions of the great prince thy father, now no more—and, I repeat, in contempt of the holy church itself, thou hast taken for thy wife Bertha of Burgundy, thy cousin, the widow of the Count de Blois, without the dispensation or approval of his Holiness Pope Gregory the Fifth,—thou hast called down upon thee the wrath and vengeance of the holy church.”

“ Father,” said Robert, in a firm and manly tone, “ methinks the church might have been more informed as to this matter, ere she loosed her terrors on our heads. Know that, so far from acting in defiance of her authority, we did obtain her permission in the dispensation of our bishops, who have full right to bestow it.”

“ I know it,” replied the churchman; “ I know that thou hast seduced from their allegiance to his holiness, and frightened into submission to thine own impious will, the unworthy and cringing priests whom thine erring judgment hath

placed in the high offices of thy kingdom. Think not they shall escape the wrath of the church," he added, his dark eye glancing on the mild and reverend countenance of the old Archbishop of Rheims, and seeming to communicate to it some of its own fire; for the old man, roused by the speech of the legate, said in a mild but dignified manner,

"We know not, father, how we have deserved such a reproof from one of ourselves, nor in what manner we have sinned against the holy church, or the guardian of her rights, his holiness the pope; since, for many years past, it has been the prerogative of our office to grant dispensations, nor has our right to do so been questioned till now."

"I am not here," said the legate proudly, "to dispute with the rebellious and unworthy sons of the church, but to bear her mandates to them. Know, then, that thou, Archbishop of Rheims, and thine associates in this matter, who have, without the consent or authority of the Pope,

granted to Robert of France a dispensation for his marriage with his cousin, Bertha Princess of Burgundy, are sentenced, by the just indignation and wrath of the church, to be no longer ministers of the same, nor to be partakers of her communion and spiritual blessings, having proved yourselves unworthy."

"How now, sir churchman!" exclaimed the king, roused to indignation, "dost thou mean the Pope will dare to excommunicate my bishops for complying with the injunctions of their sovereign and liege lord? Times are indeed changed with the representatives of St. Peter! It was not so very long since that they used to send as supplicants to crave our friendship and protection. Go, tell thy master, sir churchman, that though we no longer add to our titles those of Patrician of Rome and Exarch of Ravenna, yet is our power by no means so fallen, as that he shall with impunity commit so foul an outrage against it."

"My son, my son!" said the old archbishop, laying his aged and feeble hand upon the arm of

Robert, whose speech was rather dictated by the indignation of his soul, than regulated by the respect and awe in which the legates of the pope were then held—"Let not thy displeasure vent itself thus in invective against the holy church : let us hope, that by humility and submission, her anger may yet be averted from her children."

"Thy conscience, sir archbishop," said the legate, whose reddened brow and flashing eye showed with what difficulty he stifled the feelings of offended pride which the speech of the king had roused—"thy conscience has prompted the only means by which the wrath of his holiness may yet be appeased, who, dealing rather as an indulgent father than as an insulted lord, has empowered me to say, that by speedy and humble submission, performed in person at the feet of his holiness, and by casting yourselves upon his clemency and forgiveness, and by compliance with such commands as he may lay upon you, thou, and thine abettors in this matter, may yet avert the wrath of the church, and return in peace and

favour into its bosom.—To thee, sir king!" he added, turning to Robert, and undaunted by the frown of contemptuous indignation with which at first he heard him, but which by degrees was supplanted by a deeper expression—"to thee I am enjoined to say, that by a like submission, and by homage and satisfaction rendered in person to his holiness, thou mayest yet appease his just and wrathful indignation, and on performance of certain forms of penitence needful for the expiation of thy great and grievous sin, and for the absolution of thy soul: these thou must perform for seven years, and instantly and for ever put from thee Bertha, unlawfully called thy wife!"

"Hold! sir priest," cried the king, transported at length beyond control, and starting from his seat; "thou dost tempt our patience too far! Say one word more, and, by Heaven, the holy office that thou dost abuse shall not protect thee! I have been insulted too long by thee. Begone, I say!" he added, stamping, and pointing to the door of the apartment; "return to thy master,

and bid him loose his thunders. I would brave them in their utmost fury, rather than avert them by such means. And tell him," he added, drawing his majestic figure to its utmost height, "that Robert of France challenges him—nay, defies him, and every other earthly power, to part him from the woman he loves!"

He stood firmly and majestically, till the proud but awed priest had retreated, darting at the same time upon the king a look of deep revenge, such as at any other time might have reposed many an anxious fear, but which was now unheeded by Robert, who waited till the door had closed upon the legate; then suddenly turning, and regardless of the consternation that reigned in his council, he rushed by another entrance from the apartment.

CHAPTER IX.

WITH a hasty step and swelling heart Robert traversed the long galleries and winding passages of his rude palace, as if endeavouring to escape from some vision that he could not dispel. He trod as one who could not shake from his mind some undefinable but painful dream, and seemed urged on by high excitement, and feelings wound to their utmost capability of tension.

He had reached the western tower of the building, but his restless steps seemed about to seek another course; for he was passing the door of the turret, in which the hours of his leisure were most frequently spent, when the liquid sounds of a well-known voice fell on his ear, and he retraced his steps to listen to the wild but

pleasing melody, to which the following words were sung:—

“ Frail as the blossom on its stalk,
And transient as its hues,
And full of tears as its full-blown cup,
Laden with summer dews ;
Welcome ever, seldom stayed,
Is the sprite in a broider'd dress,
A robe of mingled sun and shade,
By mortals yclep'd Happiness.
I've seen her beckon as she tripp'd
In merry masquerade,
Through crowded halls and palaces,
Light as a green grass blade.
I've seen her musing on the brink
Of a thought-beguiling stream,
With nimble fingers, by fairy light,
Weaving her gossamer dream.
I've watch'd the glow of her conscious cheek,
When a smile was mantling there,
'Twas the herald light that, ere day doth break,
Empurples the atmosphere.
Paler and paler it hath glow'd,
And anon it hath vanish'd quite,
And tear after tear hath silent flow'd
Down the cheek of the maiden sprite.
Buoyant and brisk were her movements, like
Young leaves in the breath of spring ;
And the play of her bosom was soft and light,
As the play of the fire-fly's wing :

And sometimes it would throb and swell
With a deep and hollow sigh,
Such as Sorrow heaves from her silent cell
In her hour of agony.

The world at her feet like a wooer lay,
Ne'er was mountain nymph so coy ;
With young Fancy she 'd play the livelong day,
And with Truth she would sometime toy.
She 's fallen, alas ! from a higher sphere,
An offspring of angel's love—
Crowds that in vain have sought her here,
Shall dwell with her above."

By degrees, as he listened, his brow unbent, his eye resumed its wonted mildness, his heart seemed unburthened, and, while surrendering his senses to the bewitching influence of those loved tones, he forgot for a moment the existence of the legate or the pope ; but the melody ceased, and the sadness returned to his brow. He stood, uncertain whether to retreat or join the songstress in her turret, when he heard repeated the words,

" Crowds that in vain have sought her here,
Shall dwell with her above."

" Now, Heaven grant it be so !" said Robert, entering the turret.

“ Ah ! truant, is it thou at last ?” said Bertha, joyfully springing from her seat, and hastening to meet him : “ I have waited thee a long time.”

“ Is it so much past sunset ?” asked Robert.

“ The sun has set some time,” replied Bertha, “ the twilight even is fading now ; but I have been here expecting thee some hours, leaving d’Arcy and Clotilde to lead the revels.”

There was a pause ; for Robert did not reply. He had sat down upon a seat beside her ; the dim twilight prevented her seeing the dejection of his countenance, and, unwilling to disturb his thoughts, Bertha did not break the silence, till, surprised at its long continuance, she gently laid her hand upon his arm.

“ Robert,” she said, but her words were unheeded—“ Robert,” she repeated, “ thou art weary with this long audience. Shall I sing to thee ? wilt thou listen to my song of Happiness ?”

“ Happiness !” repeated he, as if musing aloud.

"No, no, it is not for us to sing of happiness; no, nor to dream of it!"

"Robert!" said Bertha, alarmed at his manner, "what meanest thou? Thou art dejected. What has happened to disturb thy peace?" But he spoke not. "What is it," she continued, "that Bertha may not know?" trying, by playing with her slender fingers on his arm, to attract his attention, but in vain. "Nay, then," she added, after a pause, "I will ask thee no farther; answer me but one question. Robert," she said, in a tone of deep tenderness, "has Bertha in aught offended thee? Tell her, she implores thee, is she so unhappy?"

The faltering voice in which she spoke at last roused the attention of her husband.

"Bertha, Bertha!" he cried, clasping his hands upon his brow, "do not, do not torture me! I know not how to answer thee,—Yes, thou art unhappy!"

"Ha!" cried Bertha, "is it then so? Oh!

Robert, in what have I transgressed ?— in loving thee too well ?”

“ Thou hast guessed it !” he answered, in a wild tone of anguish. “ It is thine only crime, thine only source of woe. Thou hast loved me too well : but for me, how bright might have been thy life—my love has blighted it, has ——”

“ Robert, Robert !” she screamed in agony, “ what means this raving ? tell me, tell me all— what is this mystery ? I cannot long bear this suspense : speak, oh ! speak !”

“ Bertha,” he said, “ I had not meant to tell thee ; but it matters not, it will soon be proclaimed throughout France, throughout Europe— our union is denounced by the Church as illegal— our bishops’ dispensation is declared void ; and,” he continued, his bosom heaving, and his voice rising to a scream of agony as he proceeded— “ Bertha, I am commanded to part—to part from thee !”

One wild shriek rang through the turret—

she fell a dead weight at his feet: "I have killed her!" he cried. "Oh! was it not enough that I must part from her—must curse myself as the author of all her sorrows, but I must be the murderer of her life, as of her happiness? Bertha, Bertha!" he cried, taking her cold hand in his, and pressing it to his lips—to his heart, while he supported her lifeless form, and wildly called upon her to wake.

The dim twilight had been long succeeded by the darkness of night; the lattice was still open, but disclosed no ray of comfort to the agonised heart of Robert. Neither moon nor stars cheered the face of the heavens; heavy dark clouds only seemed to threaten an impending storm; and the night-wind whistled shrilly through the neighbouring grove, ere it swept coldly through the turret, in the centre of which stood the wretched, wretched monarch.

Unable to leave the burthen he clasped in agony to his bosom, he loudly called for assist-

ance. "Why come they not?" he muttered; "they must have heard that shriek. But no; e'en now they must be at the banquet.—Hark! I hear footsteps—they come, they come!" Red flashes of light were seen through the crevice of the door, but loud and mirthful sounds accompanied them. "It is the revellers!" he cried; "they come to seek us; how, how escape them?" And, bearing with him the object of his anguish, he rushed from the turret by the opposite door to that whence the discordant sounds met his ear. Scarcely had he done so, and drawn the bolt across it, when a number of voices demanding admission were heard; and, receiving no answer, the speakers entered the apartment, little dreaming of the sorrow that had so lately reigned there. It was soon lighted by the torches of the attendants, and filled by gay and merry groups just risen from their joyous banquet.

"Her grace is not here, Clotilde," said one of the girls who entered first.

"Nay, then," said Clotilde, "she is doubtless with the king; let us wait till she returns. Sit thee here, Alice," she added, pointing to a seat beside her own.

"Not so, Clotilde, I thank thee," said the maiden; "the night wears apace, and I must away."

"And so must I—and I," exclaimed the various groups; "we had best hasten home, for the clouds are threatening."

"Fare thee well, Clotilde, queen of the revels!" said a young gallant, approaching her.

"Good night, Clotilde," said his fair partner; "bear our adieus and thanks to our loved queen."

"I will, I will," said Clotilde; "and, in her name, I wish you all good night, and peaceful dreams."

One by one the groups departed, and d'Arcy and Clotilde alone remained of that fair company. It had been remarked that day, that Clotilde danced as though she trod on air, and that she

had seldom looked more lovely or more joyous. Much had it puzzled her young companions, who had marvelled at her late sadness ; they knew not that ere the revels had begun young d'Arcy had whispered in her ear, and, when he led her forth to lead the dance, it was as his affianced bride.

"And surely it is time that I depart," said he, as he sat down beside her ; "for at day-break I set out for Aquitaine. Farewell, Clotilde ! Thank Heaven, I may call thee mine ere I depart ; and if my heart is joyous now in leaving thee, what shall it be when I return to claim thee as my bride ?"

"Clotilde, Clotilde ! come hither, quick !" cried a voice from the inner apartment.

"I come, I come !" said she, rising hastily. "Farewell, d'Arcy ! Do thy mission, and return speedily."

"I will," he replied, "oh, how gladly !"

"Farewell !" they both repeated as he kissed her brow.

She watched the door close behind him, and breathed a prayer for his speedy return.

"Clotilde ! Clotilde !" reiterated the king, opening the door of the farther apartment : " why dost thou delay ? Call the attendants — come quickly !"

" I come, sire," she replied, and hastily followed him into the apartment of the queen.

CHAPTER X.

THE mission with which the young Count d'Arcy had been charged to the Duke of Aquitaine proved more arduous, and required much more time for its fulfilment, than had been anticipated; so that many months had elapsed ere he retraced his steps northwards. During that time the fair aspect of affairs was changed in France, and the young beauty of her monarch's reign for ever marred. Since the mission of the legate, which was the first sign of the impending storm, various had been the communications between the palace of Robert and the holy see; consisting, for the most part, of threats and conditions of pardon on the side of his holiness, and of manly expostulation, but determined resistance,

on that of Robert. Finding all hopes of compliance vain, the Pope at last threatened immediate denunciation on the bishops of France, whom he seems to have considered as having assumed a privilege exclusively his own. Robert, on the other hand, called loudly on his bishops to resist so unjust a sentence, and to maintain strenuously the rights they had so long exercised, and which were now for the first time called in question. But he thought he spoke to minds as upright and as open as his own ; he was mistaken : frightened at the darkening cloud which seemed on the point of discharging its thunders on their devoted heads, the timid priests were shortly seen hastening on the road to Rome, to lay their terror and repentance at the feet of his holiness. Meanwhile the train, which in that age of superstition needed but a spark to ignite it, was now rapidly spreading through France : the love of the people began to wax cold towards their sovereign. The birth of an heir to the kingdom, which had been so ardently wished for, and which happened about this

time, caused little rejoicing in the land ; and the death of the infant, which soon followed the announcement of its birth, was instantly pronounced by the priests as a judgment upon the sinful union of its parents, and was held as such by the mass of the people. There could not be a stronger proof of the power of superstition, which then enchaind the minds of all classes of people, than this sudden revulsion of feeling towards their sovereign, so soon as the import of the mission from Rome had become known. It was in vain that Robert called on his people to stand by him in his contest with the papal power ; they shrank coldly from him, as one marked out by the finger of vengeance. Their queen, too, so lately the object of their admiration and love, was looked upon as the guilty cause of the sorrows about to fall upon the land. Superstition had not forgotten to cast its shade around her ; and many were the absurd and malignant tales that were circulated by the crafty and servile servants of the church of Rome, and believed by the mis-

guided and ignorant people, with whom superstition and religion were synonymous. Among these was the report, which obtained almost universal credence, that the queen had given birth to a monster, whose form and appearance were invested with fresh horrors in every town of France. Little did the aching heart of Bertha imagine, as she bent over the cradle of her infant, that even the magic power of superstition could impart to its form aught but innocence and holiness, such as is only seen on earth in the features of an infant, ere the passions of a riper age have fixed on them the stamp of mortality.

So stealthily had the prelates of France undertaken their journey to Rome, that the object of their absence was not at first apparent at the court of Robert, and when it did become known, it was heard by him with contempt and indignation, but with trembling and sorrow by Bertha. Reports reached them of the gracious forgiveness of the pontiff towards the offending prelates, and of his readiness to receive them again into favour:

little did they dream on what conditions, or at what sacrifices, this gracious pardon had been procured.

At last his mission was fulfilled, and the young Count d'Arcy once more found himself on the road to Paris. How often, amid the annoyances of a long and arduous negotiation, had he looked forward with longing to the time when, freed from all responsibility and care, he should abandon his mind to the contemplation of the brilliant schemes of fame and happiness in which his young and ardent fancy loved to indulge; but the vague reports that had reached the court of Aquitaine of the contest with the papal power, and of the unsettled state of the kingdom, threw a damp over his naturally buoyant spirit.

Of the change of feeling among the people he was constantly reminded by the difference of the welcome which he and his train received, and which became more and more remarkable as they approached the end of their journey. Thus dis-

tressed and annoyed at repeated and evident marks of disaffection, d'Arcy pushed on impatiently towards Paris, and did not halt till late at night, when, finding repose was absolutely necessary both for his train and their steeds, he stopped for the night at the principal hostelry of a small town through which the road lay, purposing to set out for the remainder of the journey at an early hour in the morning.

Wearied with the fatigue of the day, and harassed by uncertainty concerning the situation of those to whom his life and soul were devoted, he threw himself upon his couch, and tried to sleep; but a painful foreboding of evil, and vague anticipations of sorrow and disappointment crowded fast upon his mind: it was long ere sleep visited his weary eyelids, and, when at length they closed, his waking visions again arose in the distressing dreams which haunted his troubled slumber.

His imagination pictured to him the lovely form and features of Clotilde arrayed in bridal

elegance. He gazed with rapture on her tearful eye and blushing cheek, as he led her to the chapel in which their nuptials should be celebrated. The sun shone brilliantly upon him and his bride, and all seemed gay and joyous: he stood by her side at the altar; the sweet voice of Bertha bade the priest begin the ceremony: but suddenly a cloud seemed cast around them, and all was darkened. He looked upon his bride; but it was the dark veil of the nun, not the bridal veil, that shaded her pale and suffering features. The deep-toned voice of the priest broke the dead silence that reigned; but it was to utter the prayer over the dead, not the benediction over the living; and the bell, that seemed to strike upon his heart, woke in the deep funeral toll, not in the blithe peal of jubilee. But it was repeated again and again—louder and louder it fell upon his ear; voices, too, seemed in strange discordance to arise and join in the confusion: he felt a grasp laid upon his arm; he tried to disengage himself, but could not.

He awoke, and found his little page clinging to him in an agony of terror, asking eagerly what the noises were that had scared him in his sleep.

In an instant d'Arcy sat up, and asked himself if it were all a dream ; but the deep toll again met his ear, and hurried footsteps and strange voices sounded close to his apartment. Hastily throwing his garments around him, he left his chamber, and found the inmates of the house, with curiosity equal to his own impressed upon their countenances, rushing towards the street, which was crowded with people hurrying to the spot whence the sounds proceeded which had thus broken upon their midnight slumbers. He hastened with them to the church, and at last reached the entrance ; but the multitude assembled upon the steps of the portico delayed him for some minutes, and gave him time to remark the deportment of those around him. He observed that their eager curiosity was soon replaced by an expression of horror and dismay.

The weather, which had for some time been threatening, seemed now, with large drops of rain, and rumbling peals of distant thunder, to announce an approaching tempest. Many gave up the attempt to enter the church, and slowly and sadly departed ; and some formed themselves into groups, and spoke in whispers, as of some matter of great and solemn import.

The attention of d'Arcy was arrested by hearing the name of his sovereign spoken in no gentle accents, by a man who had just joined a group near which he was standing. His companions seemed to be endeavouring to restrain his loud abuse of the king.

"Whisper !" he exclaimed, "there is little need to whisper ; ere two more suns have set, the deed of this night will be proclaimed in every corner of this realm, and hailed by every true son of merry France."

"Hush ! hush !" exclaimed another ; "I trust me, thou art mistaken : as a king he was blamed, and, it may be, he was justly blamed ; but as an

outcast from the blessings of religion and society—as one torn from the highest to the lowest earthly station—as one on whom the curse of Heaven and mankind alike doth rest, trust me, he will both be pitied and regretted.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” returned the first with a contemptuous laugh; “it will be kind and forgiving in those who pity him, truly; but I fear me he will consider their pity about as much as he has done their love; for I suppose our beauteous queen, to whom this nation owes so much, will still console him for all that he has lost on earth, and mortgaged in heaven for her sole love. What thinkest thou, friend? will this woman, this Bertha——”

“Villain!” cried the Count d’Arcy, striding with clenched hands towards the speaker, “let not that tongue of thine again name the name of Bertha, or, by Heaven, it shall ere long rue its insolence!”

The man turned round angrily at this interruption, and would doubtless have prolonged the

dispute; but at that instant issued from the church, amid the renewed tolling of the bells, a long dark train of priests moving in slow procession. The attention of all was instantly attracted to them, and d'Arcy, whose indignation would not let him quietly gaze on those who had thus been deliberately excommunicating his father and his king, was hurrying from the church, when he was startled by the sound of his own name, and was in an instant overtaken by an old retainer of the family, whom he had left at Paris.

"Hubert, is't thou? Dost bring me news from Paris?"

"I knew 'twas he," said the old man, with pride — "I knew it was a d'Arcy's voice that checked yon coward's insolence."

"But, Hubert, what tidings?"

"Wait, wait, my lord, till I have breath to tell thee; or rather, let us mount our horses speedily, for thou must hasten back with me to Paris, and, as we journey, I can tell thee all."

"Nay, Hubert, tell me now—if thou canst tell me more than yonder train of cringing priests has told me this night. How fares my lord the king? The queen, too—is she well? Dost thou bring me no tidings from them?"

"Not so, my lord; it is not from them I come, but from the adopted daughter of our queen, the Lady Clotilde."

"Ha! is't so? Good Hubert; pr'ythee, tell me quick."

"She bade me urge thee by all that is dear to thee, to linger not, but with all speed return to court."

They hastened to the stables of the little inn, and a few minutes found them on the road to Paris.

CHAPTER XI.

So low has that great power fallen which for many ages held unbounded influence over the fortunes, not only of individuals, but of states and empires, that it is scarcely possible to realize to our minds, by any comparison with the powers of our own times, the awe which accompanied its decrees and overwhelmed the minds of its victims, nay, that seems sometimes to have crushed the hopes and paralyzed the energies of fair and prosperous nations.

Such was France when Hugues Capet, in dying, left the kingdom to his son ; but far other was its condition when the fatal blow, which had for some time hung threatening over the land, fell

upon it. The long-smouldering passions and the rebellious spirit of the people now broke forth in unrestrained fury; the authorities and officers of the state could not hold out against them; and in the space of a few months, the face of the land presented but one scene of confusion, misery, and crime.

There seemed one object alone in which men of all minds, of all ranks, and ages, combined; namely, the persecution of the wretched beings whose ill-fated love had been the cause of all this misery. With minds inflamed by superstition and revenge, they hunted them from place to place, not merely in the hope of obtaining the high rewards offered by the Church, to those who in taking their lives should rid the earth of those who were cursed upon it and under it, but in the firm belief that by so doing, they would procure for themselves both pardon and absolution from every sin.

The number of attached and devoted adherents which once swelled the train of the prosperous

and amiable monarch, had been gradually thinned by the desertion which superstition or policy had effected in it, till, on d'Arcy's return to Paris, he found it reduced to very few, who soon after left them, and himself and Clotilde remained the sole attendants of those whose bounty had so long sustained and fostered them. But the violence and indignation of the people did not suffer them to remain where they then were; and d'Arcy, after assisting Robert and Bertha, with the son of the latter, to escape to some distance from the capital, tore himself once more from Clotilde, who still devoted herself to the service of her loved mistress, and left them, in the hope of rousing those spirits in whom some spark of loyalty or love might yet smoulder, to rally round their prince once more. But the name at which the kingdom formerly would kindle with enthusiasm was now cursed, as they believed, by Heaven—and who would enlist under it?

Dispirited and disheartened at his want of

success, d'Arcy returned from the enterprise he had undertaken at such imminent risk of his own life and safety, and determined to rejoin the fugitives; but this was not easy, and many months of anxiety elapsed ere he could track them in their wanderings.

The secrecy and precaution it had become necessary for them to observe, made it not only difficult to trace their route, but most hazardous to make inquiries about them; as any description of their persons, in the least degree minute, might awaken suspicion and prove most fatal to their safety. The Count d'Arcy sought them vainly in the neighbourhood where he had parted from them, and was about to leave it without obtaining any tidings of their retreat, when he bethought him of his old servant Hubert, who, being a native of the place, had been sent by him to reside there, and to watch, as much as he could without exciting suspicion, over the safety of the royal party. Having had reason to doubt the fidelity of the few retainers who accompanied

him on his fruitless expedition, he dismissed them ere he approached the supposed abode of the king, being unwilling to risk his safety by discovering it to others but himself. He inquired there if an old man of the name of Hubert Gouvion was living in those parts, and was directed to a spot which lay beyond the little church and cemetery of the place. The attention of d'Arcy was arrested, as he passed through the latter, by a group of children who were busied in demolishing a simple monument, which had all the appearance of having been lately erected. The little creatures were relentlessly tearing from the wooden cross the ivy which had been trained on it. With some sympathy for the mourner who had tended it, d'Arcy turned to remonstrate with the little destroyers, when he was struck with the simplicity of the inscription, which consisted merely of the name of "Constance." The blood of d'Arcy ran cold as he remembered that, in their flight, it had been agreed amongst them that Clotilde

should assume that name, her own being too well known as associated with the queen's, for her to retain it with safety.

"Tell me, in mercy!" he exclaimed to one of the children, arresting its hand in the work of demolition, "whose is this monument? know ye aught of it?"

"Ay," said one of them, "that is the new one; it has not been up long."

"But know ye whose it is? Why do you deface it?" returned d'Arcy.

"Because," replied the child, "it must not stay here; and father says he shall take away the cross."

"Then why was it placed here, if it may not stay?"

"Because —" began the child, then looking up in his face, she said timidly, "Do you not know who she was?"

"And who, in God's name! was she?" cried d'Arcy impatiently, for the circumstance of the

tomb being thus obnoxious seemed to point it out as appertaining to the persecuted party.

"I do not know," cried the child, frightened by the vehemence of his manner; "but she belonged to the unholy ones, and——"

"Good God!" exclaimed d'Arcy, "is it so?" and for a moment he yielded to the dreadful idea; then clinging again to hope, he asked, "But is there no one who can tell me more about her?—is there no one in the neighbourhood who knew her?"

"There is old Antoine Gouvion," said another of the children; "she died at his house, and he had her buried: they say he bribed Father André to read the service over her, or he would never have done it."

"And where does Antoine live?" asked d'Arcy.

The child pointed to the house whither he was proceeding in search of Hubert when he had been thus diverted from his path. Abruptly

leaving the group, he strode towards it, his mind tortured with the alternate suggestions of hope and despair. He turned faint, and his brain seemed to reel as he stood on the threshold; he knew not what he might be doomed to hear within. He knocked at last at the door; it was slowly and cautiously opened by a dame advanced in years, and of no inviting aspect.

"Whom seek you?" was her inquiry, ere d'Arcy could address her.

"Hubert Gouvion," he replied, "and on matter of business."

"You must turn elsewhere then, master, for he is not here."

"Pr'ythee, good dame, inform me where he is, for I must find him, and my errand brooks no delay. He has been here lately, I know."

"Forsooth, I have other things to do than to watch other people's movements; in these times one has hard work to look after one's own affairs."

"It is but too true, dame: yet I would

gladly discover Hubert's abode ;" and he slipped a coin into her hand : " he has nought to fear from my knowing it."

" I want not your gifts, master," said the woman ; " since I cannot do your bidding, I will not take the price. I wish you good morrow and better success ;" and she shut the door in a manner that defied all farther parley.

" Fool that I was to trifle with the beldame !" exclaimed d'Arcy ; " she might have told me if that tomb were——. Yet I will try her once more. Ho ! good dame !" and he knocked repeatedly with his staff upon the door, but the cautious housewife would not open it, and he was again left to his own misgivings.

He scarcely dared to incur suspicion by inquiring of chance passengers the place of Hubert's present abode, as it was evident he had been the subject of persecution, from his former hostess's caution ; yet it seemed to him the only course, and he retraced his steps through the churchyard.

The little group had departed, and he was alone there. He picked up some of the ivy-leaves, now strewed upon the ground, and stood for some time over the little tomb in a state of fearful anguish; yet, though he felt the probability was but too strong against him, he could not yet despair, or realize the horrible thought that he stood by the grave of Clotilde.

"They must have left the place," he said, musing to himself: "they were evidently discovered, by what the child told me, and, I trust, have escaped; yet, how to trace them I know not. Can it be that they have taken refuge with that old attendant of the queen's childhood? Yet, no! their persons must be too well known in the neighbourhood of Blois, for Dame Constance's to prove a safe asylum for them. Constance! — Constance! — Oh blessed thought!" he exclaimed, as the similarity of the name with that on the cross struck him, "Heaven grant that it be so! She died, too, the child said, in the house of Hubert's kinaman, and I have heard

him say she was related to him. Clotilde ! had it been thou, they scarce had ventured to raise o'an this rude tribute to thy memory."

Strong hope now buoyed up his mind, which a few moments before had been in a state bordering on despair. How selfish does grief make us. A few months since, and d'Arcy would have mourned for the old adherent of Bertha's house, who had shown such strong and constant devotion to her mistress in all her varying fortunes ; but now, the mere supposition of her death brought hope and comfort to his soul. He bethought him that, if by any means he could ascertain the age and appearance of the deceased, he might assure himself with more confidence it was not Clotilde, and he determined to lodge for the night at the little inn where he had left his horse.

It was early in spring, and he had not perceived, in the busy conflict of his feelings, that it was quite dark. He took the path by which, as he thought, he had entered the cemetery. It

was at some distance from the village, and no lights appeared to guide his course; now tripping over some unmarked grave, or being stopped in his path by some monument or cross, he continued to grope his way, till, after some time, his steps became less obstructed. He felt around, but met with no hindrance, and concluded he had left the place of the dead, and had gained the road: he pursued it, but still no sign of the village appeared. At last he found himself at the entrance of a wood, surrounded by old trees on every side, and stumbling over their roots, which spread in all directions. He endeavoured to retrace his steps, but only seemed to penetrate deeper into the wood, nor, after many attempts, could he find an outlet. He was on the point of resolving to pass the night there, for he saw no other resource, when he descried a faint light at some little distance. At first he thought it was stationary, it moved so slowly, but he afterwards saw that it was carried by some one who was coming towards him. He

advanced to meet it, and, guided by it and the sound of the footstep on the frosty ground, came close to the bearer, who seemed deaf or absorbed in thought ; for though he constantly and mechanically looked around, yet he appeared not to heed the sound of d'Arcy's step, or be aware of his approach, till he accosted him.

" Who art thou ?" exclaimed the old man in great alarm ; and as he dropped his lantern in surprise, its light shone upon the face of the youth, who at once recognized the voice of Hubert. " My master ! my master !" sobbed the old man, and the lord and his dependant were locked in each other's embrace.

" Thank Heaven thou dost live !" said the latter. " Thou hast been on a perilous errand ; but this place is not safe for thee : thou must not remain here. Yet tell me, is there hope, my master ?"

" None from men, I fear me, Hubert. But what of thy charge ? — where are they ? — and whose is that monument ?"

“ Poor old Constance’s, the queen’s nurse,” replied Hubert — “ God have mercy on her soul !”

It was some minutes ere d’Arcy could speak : his heart swelled with joy and gratitude ; then sitting with Hubert on some projecting roots, he bade him tell him all that had occurred.

“ Poor soul !” continued Hubert, “ she was ever faithful to her mistress ; and some time after you left us, she joined us here, having travelled alone in her old age from Blois. She remained with the queen, and for some time all was well, till one day there was a great commotion in the village. It seems that Pierre, Dame Constance’s son, had traced his mother, and thus discovered that the king and queen were in these parts. I heard him proclaim it to the people in the market-place ; and, putting himself at their head, he vowed to place the fugitives in their power within an hour’s space from that time, or abide patiently the consequences of their wrath. He is the man, my lord, we heard abuse the

king in such unmeasured terms on the dreadful night that the anathema was read against him in the churches. He has since been a furious leader of the people's rage. The multitude armed themselves with whatever they could grasp at the moment, and with dreadful shouts and imprecations marched through the churchyard to the little suburb where the king and queen had taken refuge.

“ At the first intimation of what was going on, I went to their abode by a lane that is little known ; but I had trod it often in my youth. It was too narrow to admit the multitude, and avoided the churchyard. I made what haste I could, and found them in dreadful alarm, having heard the shouts. The Lady Clotilde, who had ever the readiest wit in Christendom, and the most loyal heart, had found out some time before, on the edge of this wood, a well that had been begun many years ago but never finished ; so that it was little known, and a good hiding-place ; but how to get there was the question.

The bloodhounds were already approaching the churchyard — there was not a moment to lose. The king and queen, in their peasants' disguise, left the house by a back way, undetected; and passing round the churchyard whilst the mob was in it, reached their hiding-place in safety, just as the wretches arrived at their abode. In the mean time, the Lady Constance, as we call her now, had put on the old woman's dress she wore for pastime in days gone by, when she accosted the king and you, my lord, in the garden, and you did not know her in it. She bade me saddle the old mule that I have rode these many years; and getting on, she put the prince behind her, bade him call her grandame, and thus jogged quietly out of the town. We settled where she was to go, and as soon as it was safe, I was to take the king and queen to join her by what means I could.

“ Dame Constance was in the town when she heard the noise and riot. She hastened home; but they had all escaped when she got there :

the mob was surrounding the house. Never shall I forget her horror, poor soul! when, as she stood watching at some distance, she discovered that the ringleader was her own son. She rushed to him, and implored him by every tender epithet and sacred tie to withhold his search. The wretch, only assured by her distress that he was right in his assertion, laughed at it, and persevered with increased rage. The fury of the people was soon however turned against himself. After vainly searching all the neighbourhood, the mob taxed him with having deceived them; and, exasperated at their disappointment, they all but killed him, and he was glad to hide his head. I overheard one of them say he had assembled them to pursue an old hag on a donkey, by whom I found he meant the Lady Clotilde; but she acted her part of a deaf old woman so well as completely to deceive them, and they let her proceed unmolested.

“As soon as the people were quiet again, I bought a vehicle at a neighbouring village, and

removed the king and queen by night to the spot, some leagues off, where she was awaiting them in great anxiety. Poor old Constance was dying, and could not be moved; but the queen would not go till she had made me promise I would return and see her to the last. She was at my brother's house, where, finding her to be a relative, they had generously taken her in; and the people hearing she was dying, suffered her to do so in peace. They have not, however, relaxed in their search, and, finding myself recognised as one attached to the party, I was obliged to conceal myself in this wood, and have not dared to leave my hiding-place till to-night, when I was about to commence my journey, and encountered you, my honoured master; and praised be Heaven that I see you safe!"

They then hastily concerted measures for leaving the place ere daybreak should expose them to detection. With some difficulty d'Arcy contrived to get his horse without disturbing the people at the hostelry, and with his old retainer

behind him, he had proceeded some way on his journey ere the dawn broke. But they did not finish their journey together: worn out by old age and fatigue, the old man died ere they had found the objects of their search, who had left the spot where he had parted from them. Whether d'Arcy was destined to find them, after such wanderings, trials, and disappointments, will be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

THE relentless pursuit of which Robert and Bertha had become the victims, rendered it impossible for them to remain long in any asylum, however obscure. To the charity of man they had long ceased to trust ; and the dense shade of the forest, or the gloom of the hidden cave, was now their only refuge. Though they offered but a cold and cheerless welcome, the fugitives were not in danger while their guests, from the fierce and evil passions which then raged among their fellow men.

After many months of cruel privation and suffering, the persecuted party at length took shelter in a deserted hut, in a wild and desolate forest,

and they had for some time remained there in comparative peace. The benevolent heart of Robert was nevertheless often pained by the vague reports which occasionally reached them, of the misery which prevailed throughout the country; and the despair and utter hopelessness of their lot ever lay a dead weight upon the hearts of those on whom the Church had laid its bann; for its persecution ceased not with the death of its victims. Dreary as was the present, the future was darker still; no priest might shrive them in their dying hour; their bones were deemed unmeet for human burial; and they were alike cursed (or believed to be so) in this world and in the next. To these various causes of sorrow, anxiety concerning the success of d'Arcy, and even his life, was added; and though, before Robert and Bertha, Clotilde would not give way to sorrow, many were the prayers that rose for his safety, and the tears that fell from her blue eyes, unheeded by aught but the wild trees around her; for her devotion to the fugitives had cut her

off from all intercourse with any other human being.

It was towards the close of a long summer's day—a period so enjoyable to the happy, but so weariful to those who sorrow—that Clotilde sat by the side of Bertha, no longer Queen of France and of the hearts of a smiling and prosperous nation. Clotilde watched her anxiously; for she had remained, as was now often her wont to do, for many hours in a mournful reverie, from which nought could rouse her.

The king had left them, to seek with the young prince, in the wilds of the forest, such exercise as was needful at his youthful age. Anxious to rouse her charge from the state of apathy in which she had remained so long, Clotilde made some remark about the king's return. Bertha looked at her mournfully.

“His return could not give me joy now,” she said.

“Oh! sweet lady, say not so,” replied her attendant; “I have never seen it fail; nay, I have

known it win a smile from thee, when nought beside could do it."

"That was ere I had cursed him," said Bertha, in a tone that made Clotilde shudder; "ere the sound of his footstep only reminded me that it cursed the earth on which it fell; ere I saw myself a blot upon the fair face of creation, to mar all that was bright and peaceful within the influence of my own wretchedness."

"Oh! my own mistress, talk not so despairingly; there may yet be hope."

"Hope!" replied Bertha, as if the sound were strange to her; "where is there hope? Look with me at the drear prospect before us." And she drew Clotilde towards her as if actually looking at it; then, appealing to her, she asked, "Seest thou aught of hope there?—and beyond! oh! beyond it is darker, quite dark! Oh! for one bright ray! my very soul is withering for light! Give me, Heaven! give me one gleam, to cheer, to save it! But Heaven! can it hear me, whom even the vile earth loathes!"

She sank again upon the seat from which she had risen in her energy, overpowered by violent emotion. Clotilde, who had watched her in alarm, (for she sometimes feared her mind would yield in these conflicts with despair,) supported her head upon her bosom, and gazed upon her so earnestly for many minutes, that she did not perceive they were no longer alone; and when, on raising her eyes, she saw the figure of a venerable old man before her, she could not conceal her surprise: Bertha also started.

“Nay, start not, my child,” said the old man, in whose appearance there was something dignified and striking; “I come not to betray thee, though well I know who thou art. Years have passed since I have looked on thee; the dark clouds which have since o’erwhelmed thee, first gathered round when I saw thee last, and took my leave of thee, as I did think, for ever: little did I then dream thou wouldst ere need comfort from me!”

“And canst thou give comfort, then?”

asked Bertha, incredulously. "I know not who thou art; and yet there is a sound in thy voice which tells me of my childish days—of Alice, of Gisèle, of Robert, ere my love had cursed him. Father! if thou canst give comfort, as thou sayest, tell me he is not cursed!—let me but hear he is not, and I am blessed in that alone, though cursed in all beside! Tell me, oh! tell me so!" she cried, throwing herself at his feet; and clasping her hands she fixed her eyes upon his, awaiting his reply.

"He is not cursed!" answered the old man, with deep emotion; "if thou—"

"I knew it," said Bertha, rising, hope again irradiating her countenance; "not Heaven itself could curse him!"

"Stay, daughter, stay," interrupted the old man, "and hear me. 'Tis in thine own power to save him; nor do I know thou wilt submit to the conditions of absolution offered thee by the Church, when thou dost hear them."

“ Father, there is no sacrifice or penance that can be devised by man, but I would welcome it to save him,—ay! were it never to look upon him more!”

“ Daughter, thou hast guessed thy penance.”

Bertha covered her face with her hands, to hide the agony that writhed every feature of it. The old man continued—

“ Thou must part from thy husband, and never look on him as long as thou shalt live; and on the performance of certain penances, the Church will restore to him his throne and rights. For thee, it has prescribed a life of prayer and penitence, by which thy sins may be atoned.—Lady! I have laboured hard in mine old age to bring thee even this sad comfort. The present pontiff was my friend in youth; he thought me dead, so long was it since any intercourse had passed between us; but I arose on his succession, to plead for thee against the dire sentence of his predecessor. I have only succeeded in procuring these hard

terms ; but, if they restore my prince to his station on earth, to his hopes of Heaven, if they bring to thee one ray of comfort, I am satisfied, my toils, my labours are requited."

"Oh ! it is comfort that I never thought to hear !" exclaimed Bertha. "Clotilde my child, thou wast right, there is hope. The blessed thought that Robert is not cursed, will uphold me in the hour of parting, will gild the time of penance, will cheer the last long hour of my life."

She burst into a flood of tears, the first that she had shed through many months of bitter suffering.

Clotilde did not check them ; it might be that she hailed them as a relief to Bertha's burdened heart ; it might be that she did not see them, for there was that in the old man's voice and features which riveted her whole attention ; she gazed on him in mute astonishment. He had all the appearance of age and infirmity, yet might not dis-

guise have given it ? And yet again, why disguise himself from her ?

She was about to speak, to hear his voice again and be assured, when, by his side, she saw—(could it be fancy now ?)—she saw one in feature, in voice the same, for he called her by her name, but in age and bearing different, to her, oh ! how far different, for it was d'Arcy's self she saw, and rushed into his arms.

“ I know thee now, valiant, faithful count d'Arcy,” said Bertha, suddenly rising ; “ I know thee by the representative thou didst leave to serve and aid the house of Burgundy ; and well has he fulfilled his trust.”

“ My child ! ” — “ My grandsire ! ” exclaimed the two d'Arcys, as they rushed to each other's embrace.

“ Clotilde ! reach me my sling that d'Arcy made me,” cried the young prince, as he entered, breathless with haste and anxiety. “ Oh ! they will slay the king, ere I can save him.”

“ Where, where ?” cried d’Arcy, eagerly.

“ In the forest hard by. Come, good d’Arcy, and fight for him.” D’Arcy instantly placing the boy on his shoulder, and bidding him show the path, rushed to the king’s assistance.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN an open space, at some little distance, the king was holding combat with two ruffians, who had fallen on him on his return to his lowly abode. D'Arcy reached the spot, as the king with a desperate blow felled one of them to the earth, to rise no more. Exhausted by the unequal contest he had sustained for some minutes, and from loss of blood—for he had been wounded, though not severely, in the onset—Robert staggered; d'Arcy hastened towards him and seized the battle-axe from his powerless hand, but as he did so, the ruffian aimed a thrust at the king with his pike. D'Arcy rushed between them to intercept it with his weapon; ere he could do so, he received a mortal wound himself: collecting his

dying force, he dealt one blow at his antagonist, and they fell at the same moment. One wild scream of horror rang through the forest, and Clotilde fell on d'Arcy's corpse!

Bertha rushing to her husband, assured herself of his safety, and wept with him by the corpse of their loved and gallant young defender. Robert gazed in deep sorrow on the body of his devoted servant—devoted in life and death; nor was aware of the presence of his grandsire, who reached the spot as d'Arcy fell, till his attention was attracted by the old man's lamentations.

“ Have I found thee but to lose thee, child of my hopes and love! to see thy young and vigorous form, thy fair and manly features, stiffen in death before my eyes? But thou art blest and happy in thy death. I will not weep for thee, but joy that thou art fallen in thy prince's and thy country's cause; and in mine own long, lingering decay will envy thee thy young and gallant death.”

“ My faithful friend,” exclaimed the king, “ hast thou come forth from thy seclusion to aid me in this crisis ? if still a d’Arcy’s arm upholds my cause, then am I not indeed forsaken. But no,” he added, looking on the corpse of the youth whom he had loved and cherished,—“ No, I will sacrifice no more brave souls to my fatal cause. The fairest, gallantest, most sweet, and cherished youth in Christendom, has e’en now died for me ! Oh ! d’Arcy, d’Arcy, would that thou hadst served a happier master, or that he had died ere thou hadst fallen for him ! No, old man ! thou hast lived a good and glorious life ; return to thy meditations and thy prayers, they will fit thee for death ; join not the small remainder of thy lot on earth to one so desolate, so hopeless as ours. Leave us—leave us to our fate,” he added, drawing his arm round Bertha, “ and mar not thine own peaceful lot by partaking it.”

“ Robert !” said Bertha, “ he has come to

bring us comfort, hopes of pardon, of peace—
hopes of earth, of Heaven!”

Robert looked at her incredulously.

“And dost thou rave, my faithful wife? Have I not yet seen enough, and am I doomed to see the powers of thy mind shaken? Is it true, or dost thou rave?”

“No, Robert, I do not, though I marvel not that thou shouldst think so. So long is it since the thought of hope or peace has visited my mind, that the sounds were strange to me, when this day I heard them from good d’Arcy’s lips.”

“Is it then true?” exclaimed the king, “and is there hope? But how? Keep me not in this suspense. On what condition is there pardon?—Yet, what matters it? Can any situation be more abject than my present one? What have I to sacrifice in quitting it?”

“Thy wife, sire!” said the old count in a tone of deep feeling.

- Robert started; Bertha gazed with eagerness on her husband's countenance, as though life and death were hanging on the workings of his mind.

"Art thou a d'Arcy," he said at length, looking sternly at the old man, "and dost thou propose to Robert of France to part from Bertha? Should I have given up friends, servants, riches, my crown, my kingdom, hope, nay, almost life itself, to wander a persecuted fugitive in mine own dominions, if I had ever thought of parting from her! Bertha! my own Bertha, I promised thee, when we little thought what misery depended on the words I spoke—I promised thee no power on earth should part thee from me till thou thyself shouldst ask it. Not all that we have since gone through can change me, or make me break my vow. I will not part from thee till thou dost ask it!"

"Then part from me now," cried Bertha wildly, throwing herself at his feet.

Robert started and looked on her, as though

to assure himself of her identity. The night had now set in, and the moon shone with more than common lustre, casting her silver and peaceful light upon the graceful forms of the forest-trees, which enclosed the open space in which they stood, as if in mockery of the struggles that were tearing their hearts. A dead and awful pause ensued. Clotilde was still insensible, and to all appearance lifeless as the body on which she lay. The sobs of the young prince over his favourite d'Arcy were the only sound that broke upon the silence. The old count leaning against a tree, awaited with intense interest the decision of the king. The moon illumined with her mournful light the pale face of Bertha, still kneeling at her husband's feet, with her eyes raised to his. He looked at her in mute astonishment.

“ Was this the Bertha who had shared his fate in misery and privation, as in prosperity and joy, with the same devotion and love? was this the Bertha who had loved him in childhood, in youth,

in manhood, till she had seemed but to exist in his affection? Yes! She was still the same: her eye was sunk, her cheek was pale; privation, sorrow, and despair, had left their stamp upon her lovely features; but that eye was still raised to his in love and tenderness, its expression was only, if it could be so, more holy."

He gazed upon her till he thought he ne'er had seen her look more lovely; he would have raised her from her position, but she forbade him.

"I too, Robert," she said,—and it would seem the conflict of feeling she had endured during the last pause, had strangely altered her voice, it was so deep and solemn—"I too little dreamed the time would come when I should ask such boon of thee. I ask it now on bended knee. I will not rise till thou dost grant it, even though I died ere I could rise again. I should die, strange as it may seem, in peace, when I had heard those words. Gaze not on me so doubtingly. I am

not changed ; I am thine own Bertha ; my soul loves thee now, as it has ever done ; it could ill exist without that love in which alone it has survived so much. Robert ! for thine own sake, for thy soul's sake, say thou wilt part with her whose love has cursed it hitherto !”

“ I cannot, will not !” said the king. “ I will part with life, but not with thee. Bertha, thou dost rend my very heart with this vain entreaty !”

“ Nay then,” she continued earnestly, “ say it for thy kingdom's sake, to which thou wilt be restored ; say it for the thousands who are overwhelmed with crime, confusion, and despair, by our sorrows. Look on the face of this nation now, and say thou wilt restore it to its once happy, smiling aspect ! For the sake of her who pleads to thee, who cares not for herself, except that she may know thou art once more blessed, as thou ever wouldst have been, but for her ill-fated love ! Oh ! if thou lovest her yet, say thou wilt raise her from despair to peace and hope.

Robert ! my husband, my prince," she added, clasping the hand with which he strove to conceal the agony of his features, " I shall hear of all thy good and pious acts ; shall see thy kingdom revive and flourish under thy dominion ; shall know that thou art loved and cherished by thy people ; I shall pray for thee while life is to me, and when death comes, shall welcome it, knowing that thou art blessed. Only tell me I may have this last comfort, 'tis the last thing that thou canst give to Bertha ?"

" Thou hast it, my noble wife," said Robert, raising and embracing her, as it were for the last time. " Thou hast it, since it is thine own earnest prayer. If it had not been, the assembled powers of Christendom had pleaded for it in vain. May it be the solace to thy wounded soul thou dost anticipate, and in thy prayers remember him whom thy love has blessed, e'en while it was cursed itself ; whose love will follow thee in thy devotions, in thy penance, in thy grave !"

"I will, I will!" cried Bertha eagerly. "Oh! it will be the blessed employment of my life to pay for thee."

"But who will protect thee, my Bertha? I cannot leave thee alone while our poor kingdom's passions rage in such unbridled licence."

"Sire," said the count, "I have orders from the church of Rome, shouldst thou comply with her demands, to offer thee an escort of pious churchmen and dependants, who accompany me as her minister in this affair. They will conduct thee to a place of safety, till the holy church, informed of your grace's submission, may formally restore thee to thy rights and kingdom; and, blessed be Heaven, these eyes may yet see it flourish under your dominion! Grace and peace be with you!"

"Thanks, kind friend," said the king. "I am poor now, and can give nought but thanks; but if again thy country and thy prince do prosper, their warmest gratitude will be for thee, their last

and truest friend. But for Bertha, for her safety?"

"Sire, if thou wilt allow me, I would charge myself with that. One of the house of Burgundy cannot want an asylum whilst a d'Arcy possesses one, however lowly. If her grace will so far honour me, suffer me to conduct her to the secluded spot where I have spent many years in peace and study, till an abode is assigned to her."

"Thou has foreseen and provided all, good d'Arcy," said the king; "and when the hour of parting comes, I will give Bertha to thy care; guard and tend her as thy daughter, till it is once more in Robert's power to watch over her welfare. And now I have one more request: thou sayest there are churchmen in thy train. I would fain see the body of my faithful d'Arcy buried with all care and tenderness. It is the last poor mark of love that I may show to him who lived and died for me; and for this poor girl, it is

enough to tell thee, she was the betrothed of d'Arcy."

"I had guessed it," he replied, looking on her with tears of pity and affection. "She is young to have seen such sorrow; I shall cherish her as the representative of my noble grandson. To-morrow, sire, your wish shall be fulfilled. But now this poor damsel needs assistance; I will seek mine attendants."

He left them for a short space, and returned with his domestics, some of whom conveyed Clotilde to the hut, whither Bertha and Robert repaired for the night, the old count spending it in deep meditation by the body of his grandson.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON the morrow, which rose in clouds, as though conscious of the sorrow it dawned upon, the struggles it must witness ere it closed, the body of d'Arcy was deposited in its grave by the attendants of his grandaïre, with such show of respect and ceremony as the time and circumstance allowed. It had been prepared in the green spot of the forest where he had fallen, by the wish of his aged relative. The priest, who read the service over it, had refused to do so in the presence of the king, as the conditions which were to release him from his present state of banishment from the blessings and privileges of the church were not yet fulfilled.

The king submitted in mournful silence, and turned towards the hut.

“And can it be, that the benediction over thy corpse, my brave d’Arcy, should be changed into a curse by the presence of thy most wretched master? and that he for whom thou soughtest thy young grave, may not shed a tear over it? This blow has fallen heavy on thy prince’s heart; yet, oh! how far more dreaded the fearful remedy that must be used to heal it! Bertha, light of my soul! it cannot live apart from thee—I cannot, cannot lose thee! Were it not for the malediction on my head, under whose influence I dare not die, I should envy thee thy quiet grave, sweet d’Arcy. Thy pilgrimage of care and danger is over: I have still a dreary, trackless waste before me, that I must traverse alone; my guiding star, my only solace, clouded and lost to me for ever!”

As he mused, he reached the hut, which had been so long his only shelter;—the well-known

figure of Bertha caught his eye. Oh ! how far dearer to his fancy was that poor hut when thus graced, than the castle he would soon inhabit, but where she must not be !

From her appearance he saw she had undergone a burst of sorrow ; but now there was a calmness in her fixed gaze, a resolution in her manner, that told him the conflict was over, and his heart sank within him, for he saw that she had nerved herself for the last struggle. She sat by the side of Clotilde, who had, from exhaustion, fallen into a temporary oblivion of her woes. When Bertha saw the king approach, a convulsed movement of her features showed with what emotion she beheld him, whom she was soon to behold no more ; but it was soon conquered.

“ It is thou, Robert ? ” she said. “ Come and hear what I would say to thee, for I have but brief time to say it in.”

“ Bertha ! why such haste ? At least till sunset thou mayest stay to me.”

“ Not so, my husband,” she said entreatingly, “ if it please thee ; it is not well for those who have to brave the precipice to stand upon the brink till they are giddy with gazing on the fearful chasm. I dare not look upon the gulph before me, lest my senses fail me, and I have not power left to cross it. When good d’Arcy has seen his grandson laid in the earth, he will return to receive and protect me ; then, Robert, we must part.” Her voice nearly failed as she pronounced the words ; but, mastering her emotion, she said, “ But it boots not now to talk of our own fate ; it is of others I would speak to thee.”

“ Of thy boy, thy lovely boy, Bertha !” exclaimed Robert, “ oh ! take him not from me ! leave me one thing to cherish, to love, as connected with thee ! If ever power, wealth, or aught of earthly blessing, return to him, not for himself will Robert hail it, but only that he may reflect it on the child of Bertha.”

“ Take him as her last treasure which she

leaves thee," said Bertha; "e'en now he soothes his childish sorrow by playing with the bow which poor d'Arcy made him. Come hither, my boy, and listen to thy mother's words. Poor child! and dost thou grieve for d'Arcy? Wouldst thou not be like him? Then must thou love and serve thy king as he did; ay, and should danger threaten, lay down thy life for him, as he did. And thou must not forget thy mother, though thou wilt see her no more, but in thy prayer remember her whose heart is breaking over thee, my bright and lovely boy."

She clasped her arms round him, and wept long and bitterly. But footsteps were heard approaching; she started, and caught the eye of Robert: they looked on each other as those who were no more to meet; each footstep, as they listened, brought them nearer and nearer to the dreaded moment. At last they sounded close: one more, and one, and with a mutual impulse they rushed into each other's arms.

When the old count entered they stood embraced, as I have seen the graceful ivy round the stately oak, so close as if to dare the world to part them. Gently rousing Clotilde, he supported her to a little distance, where his attendants waited with a litter for herself and Bertha.

As he returned sorrowfully to the hut, while yet at a little distance from it, he beheld Bertha, tearing herself from Robert, advance with hasty yet weak and failing steps towards him. She paused as she reached a wind in the forest-path which would conceal her for ever from her husband's view. He seemed as though he tried to rush towards her; she extended her hand, as if forbidding him, then pointed with it to Heaven, exclaiming fervently, "There, there, is no parting!"

She turned, and the faithful servant of her house half carried, half supported, her to the litter.

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Reader, wouldst thou know more of Robert ? The history of France will tell thee of his many virtues, which procured him the name of Pious. He cherished the son of Bertha through all opposition, and bestowed on him one of the high offices of the state ; he founded and endowed many monasteries and churches. One monument of his pious munificence still exists, and will long exist, the chief ornament of France's ancient capital — he is by almost all historians allowed to be the founder of Notre Dame.

History has also recorded the misfortunes of his second marriage, forced on him by the state. The violent temper of his wife, and the endless disputes among his sons, caused him to seek in the hopes and promises of religion that peace which in the world he had never known.

Bertha's heart was never wounded by these distresses ; she died ere they began. She was

followed into her convent by Clotilde, who, when offered an asylum by the good Count d'Arcy, and a portion of his property at his death, replied, that as she could not share her lover's early death, she would emulate the example of his life, and follow to the last the fortunes of her beloved mistress.

After some years, the devoted Clotilde founded a convent with the property bequeathed her by the old Count d'Arcy, which was afterwards richly endowed by Robert; and there is still a legend among the peasants of the Forest of —, in the south of France, in the centre of which are the ruins of an old convent, that just at the close of twilight, the spirit of a lady, in the dress of an abbess, stalks the ruins, and offers her orisons at a shrine said to have been dedicated by one of the early kings of France to his patron saint, in grateful remembrance of some deliverance from danger experienced on that spot. But to us, who are better versed in the histories

of those times, the legend would seem to infer, that, amidst the vigils and austerities of her cloistered life, Clotilde still cherished the memory of the lover of her youth.

To these Bertha submitted during the few years she survived her divorce, with a strictness which rendered her an example of piety among the sisterhood. Though she was never heard to breathe the name of the king to human ears, her devotions at times were observed to call forth emotions, such as the recollection of him only could inspire in her who seemed dead to every other tie.

She heard of his popularity, his acts of piety and benevolence, with a degree of pleasure which that alone seemed capable of imparting to her mind, though a calm sadness in general pervaded her manner and countenance, there was nought in it of despair. She lived in peace, and died in hope, in the arms of her faithful Clotilde, with the name of Robert on her lips.

The love which had grown with her existence, did it die with her death, and wither in her grave? Too pure, too constant, too spiritual to flourish in the tainted atmosphere of this fallen world, and pining for a holier, a purer one, even that of heaven, which is love—such was the love of Bertha of Burgundy.

THE END.

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